adventure

— where actions speak louder than words —

TRAVEL ISSUE

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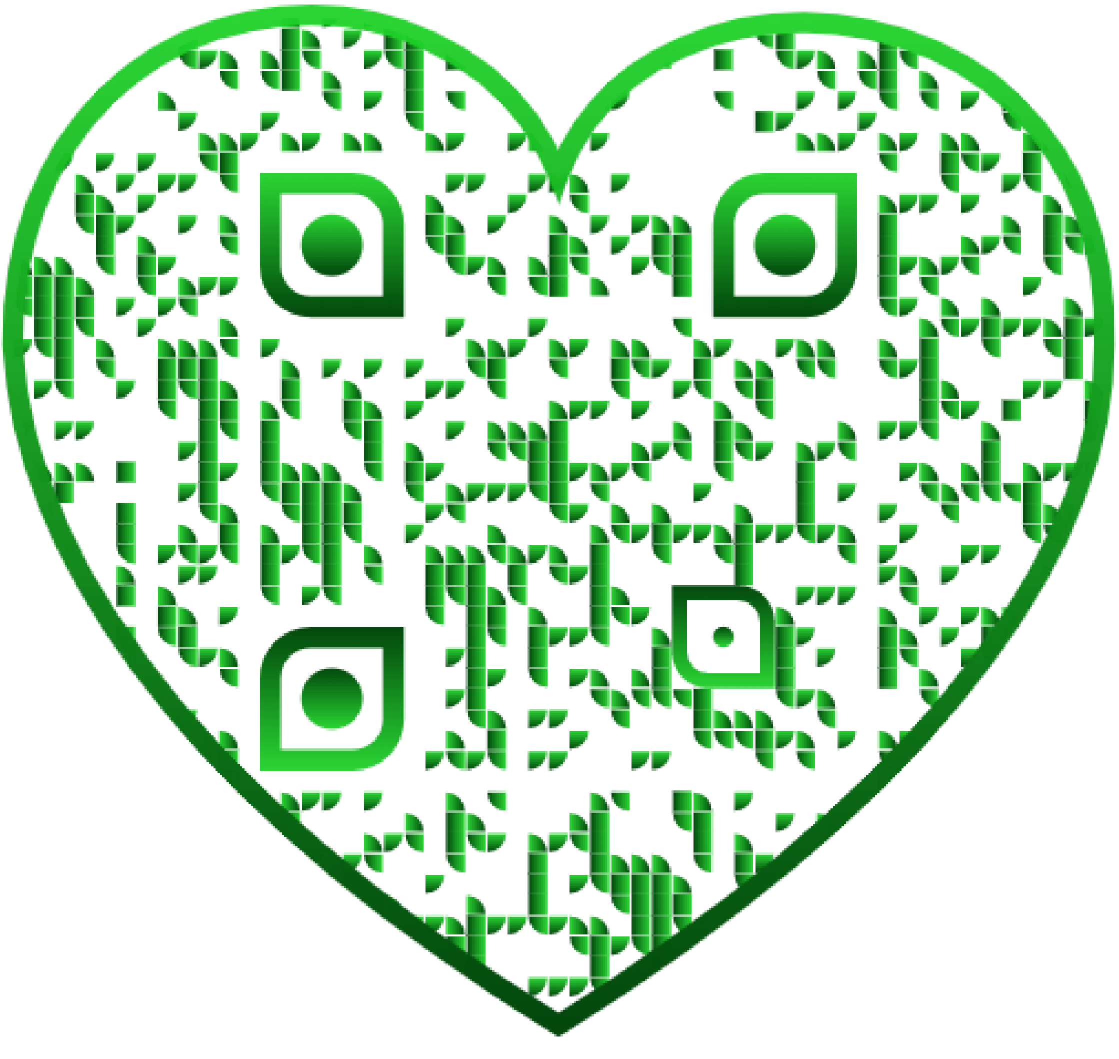

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The Subtle Art of Being Delayed

Delays are inevitable if you travel—by car, bus, train, or (infamously) by plane. Nobody wants to get delayed, and nobody is actively plotting to delay you. Yet here we are, playing the domino game of disrupted plans, where one toppled tile can send your entire itinerary crashing down.

Take my recent trip to Fiji, for instance. Departure time? 8 a.m. Translation: a 4 a.m. wake-up, ensuring you arrive at the airport bleary-eyed but hopeful. Everything's going as planned, right up until the dreaded announcement: "Flight FJ104 to Nadi has been delayed due to a mechanical issue."

Now, if they'd told us it was because the pilot slept in, or there weren't enough chicken-or-beef options to go around, or, God forbid, the in-flight entertainment hadn't been updated since 2012, I could've rolled with it. Those are annoyances, sure, but manageable. But no, this was a 'mechanical issue', and the delay kept stretching. First, an hour. Then two. The murmurs of discontent turned into outright 'booing'. Soon, the poor guy behind the check-in counter was getting it from all sides. Tears flowed. Angry fists shook. One bloke looked ready to Hulk-smash the desk.

Meanwhile, there I was, disappointed, sure, but calm. Because let's face it: I'd rather spend a day in the terminal than hop onto a plane with a wonky engine and plummet somewhere over the Pacific. Things that move break. It's just science. The real art of travel isn't in avoiding delays, it's in accepting them. If you walk into any trip thinking, Hey, it's a bonus if everything runs on time, then when delays strike, you're practically Zen.

Credit where it's due, airlines have this delay business down to a science. Gate changes? Handled. Rebooking? Smooth-ish. Swapping out crews, planes, and logistics to get everyone (and their bags) where they need to go? Like clockwork. Sure, it's frustrating, but yelling won't make the tarmac crew work faster.

To the woman sobbing about missing her wedding: Next time, maybe give yourself a a few days buffer. A day or two won't kill you (but apparently, this delay might). To the guy rushing home for his baby's birth: Look on the bright side. You made it in time, and your kid will hear how their dad heroically battled the airline gods to be there. As for the man boasting that he concocting a sob story about a dying relative just to score compensation? That's some dark, bad-juju energy. And trust me, karma's got your number.

Travel is like life: unpredictable. Sometimes, the road hands you a perfect sunset; other times, a flat tire. The secret? Acceptance. Shrug it off, grab a coffee, and flash the world your best grin.

As the cliche says,

> *"it's not about the destination it's about the journey",*

and if that journey takes you an extra few hours to get you there safely, so be it.

You'll get there eventually, might as well enjoy the ride

Steve Dickinson / Editor

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Miti enjoying a moment of calm after a demanding day

Our home for the week, thanks to Tahiti Yacht Charters

Miti and Maire from Tahiti Tourism

BEHIND THE COVER: THIS ISSUE'S TRAVEL HIGHLIGHT

This issue’s travel cover holds a unique significance for me particularly.

Each year, Adventure Magazine has the privilege of covering the world-famous va’a race in Tahiti—the Hawaiki Nui. This legendary four-day outrigger canoe race stretches from the island of Huahine to Bora Bora, navigating through breathtaking but often challenging waters.

The race itself is a spectacle of endurance, precision, and cultural pride. As part of the media contingent, we spend our days on small chase boats, skimming across choppy seas alongside hundreds of other vessels, hopping between islands to keep up with the action.

In the evenings, we’re usually accommodated in some of Tahiti’s most stunning hotels. But this year, things took a different turn—we were assigned to a yacht. Initially, visions of a cramped, stuffy cabin on a modest sailboat came to mind. Reality, however, proved to be far more extraordinary.

Our home for the event was a luxurious catamaran, provided by Tahiti Yacht Charters. Spacious, elegant, and equipped with an attentive crew and captain, it offered every comfort you’d expect. Adding to the seamless experience were two exceptional guides from Tahiti Tourism, Maire and Miti, who ensured we were always in the right place at the right time—no small feat!

The cover image for this issue features Miti enjoying a rare moment of calm, watching the sunset after a demanding day on the water. While it might not look like your traditional “adventure” shot, the photo perfectly captures the quiet beauty that often follows the intensity of exploration. It’s a scene that balances the exhilaration of the race with the serenity of life aboard a catamaran fit for a millionaire.

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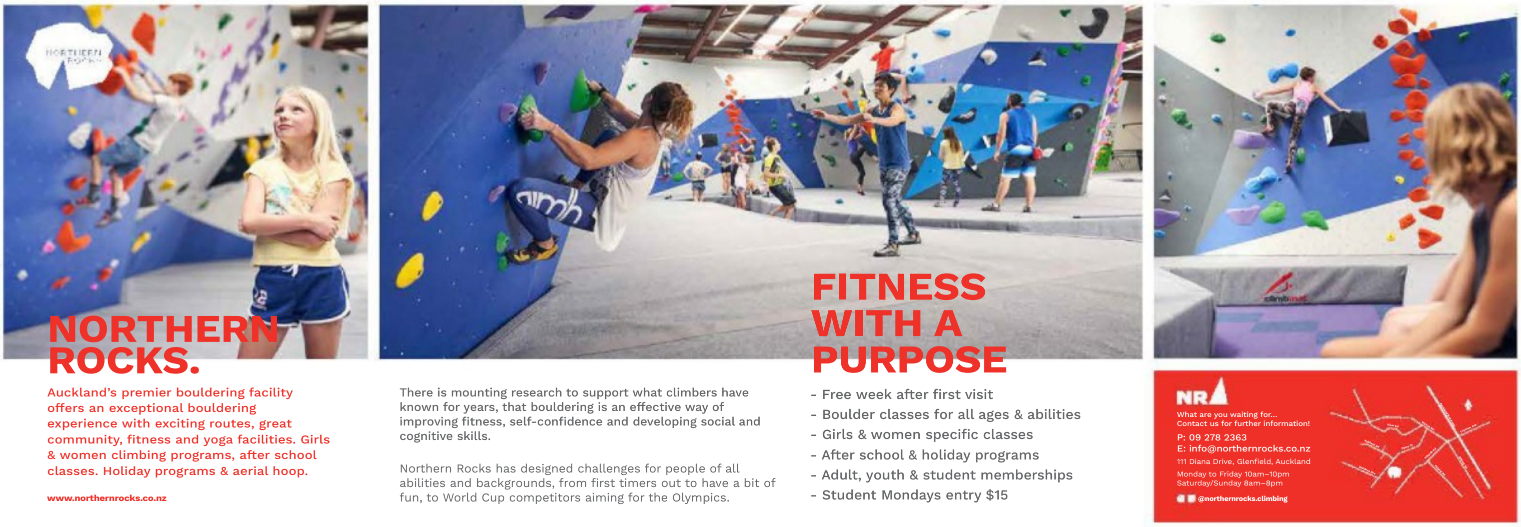

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LETTER OF THE ISSUE

Hey Adventure,

My son and I are big fans of your magazine. To be honest, we probably spend more time admiring the photos than reading the articles! I do have a request, though. You often feature incredible trips, mind-blowing achievements, and feats of endurance that are truly inspiring. But honestly, I'm not likely to run 100km or tackle a marathon anytime soon.

That's why I really enjoy Nick Laurie's stories. He brings a refreshing, down-to-earth perspective. His tales of both triumphs and missteps feel raw and relatable. They remind me that adventure isn't just about extreme feats; it's about getting out there and giving it a go.

Here's my suggestion: could you include one solid, family-friendly "do-it" activity in each issue? Whether it's a specific hiking track, a beginner-friendly bike trail, or something else that's easy to tick off, I think it would be a great addition. The more practical, the better—something we can use as a hands-on guide. I'm sure other readers would appreciate having accessible, achievable adventures they can take on with their families.

Thanks for putting out such a fantastic magazine. I think this idea could make it even better!

Cheers,
Michael Manners
Auckland

Editor's Note:
Hi Michael,
Thanks for your email! We think it's a great idea and are excited to let you know we'll be introducing a new "do-it" feature in every issue moving forward, called "your adventure". Look out for this logo to find this issue's adventure.

a your adventure...

By way of thanks, we are sending you a year subscription and a great gift from our friends at hydroflask.

If you would like to send a letter to the editor – can be about anything from 'butterflies to brick bats' send to Steve@pacificmedia.co.nz – every letter we promise will be responded to.

MOUNTAIN BIKE ROTORUA SPREADS HOLIDAY JOY WITH SHARE THE RIDE FOR XMAS

Mountain Bike Rotorua is continuing its celebrated community initiative, Share the Ride for Xmas, by gifting brand-new Giant mountain bikes to ten local whānau.

The programme invites the community to nominate deserving individuals and families who would benefit greatly from having a brand-new mountain bike.

Dozens of heartfelt nominations have been submitted, sharing stories of individuals facing mobility challenges, enduring chronic pain, or dedicating their time to voluntary work for the community.

Despite their efforts and contributions, many nominees share a common struggle: the inability to afford their own bicycles. In response, Mountain Bike Rotorua's owners—Takurua Mutu, Tuhua Mutu, Jayne Hendrikse, and Janine Kavanagh—have selected ten deserving recipients to receive brand-new Giant bikes this Christmas, with a total value of over $10,000.

Since its inception, Share the Ride has delivered more than 300 bikes to the Rotorua community. The programme continues a legacy of fostering connection, mobility, and joy through cycling.

"We are always both humbled by the stories and excited to be able to support those most in need in our community through ourShare the Ride programmes," says company director Takurua Mutu.

Mountain Bike Rotorua:
Mountain Bike Rotorua is owned by Tohu Experiences, an outdoor company owned and operated by brothers Takurua and Tuhua Mutu along with their partners, Jayne Hendrikse and Janine Kavanagh. Established 30 years ago, and under Mutu ownership for the last 15 years.

Share the ride
The programme fosters active, outdoor lifestyles while breaking down barriers of cost and access, ensuring more families can enjoy mountain biking recreationally and competitively.

Mountain Bike ROTORUA

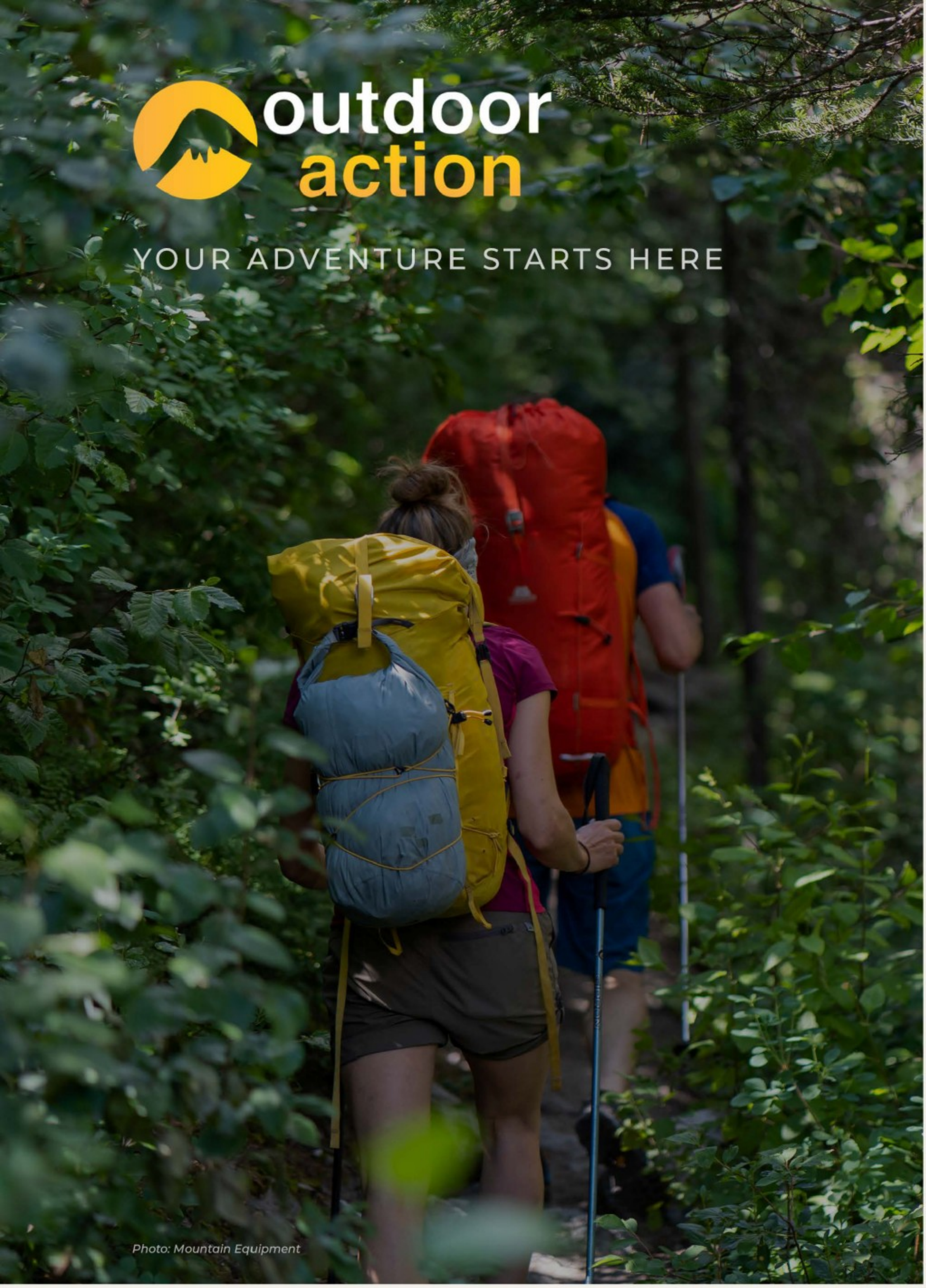

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Photo: Mountain Equipment

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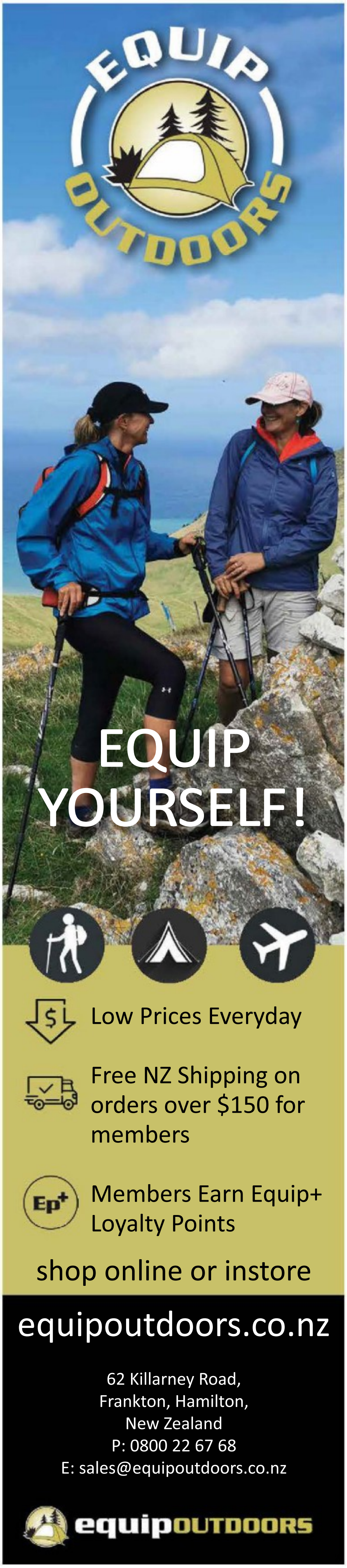
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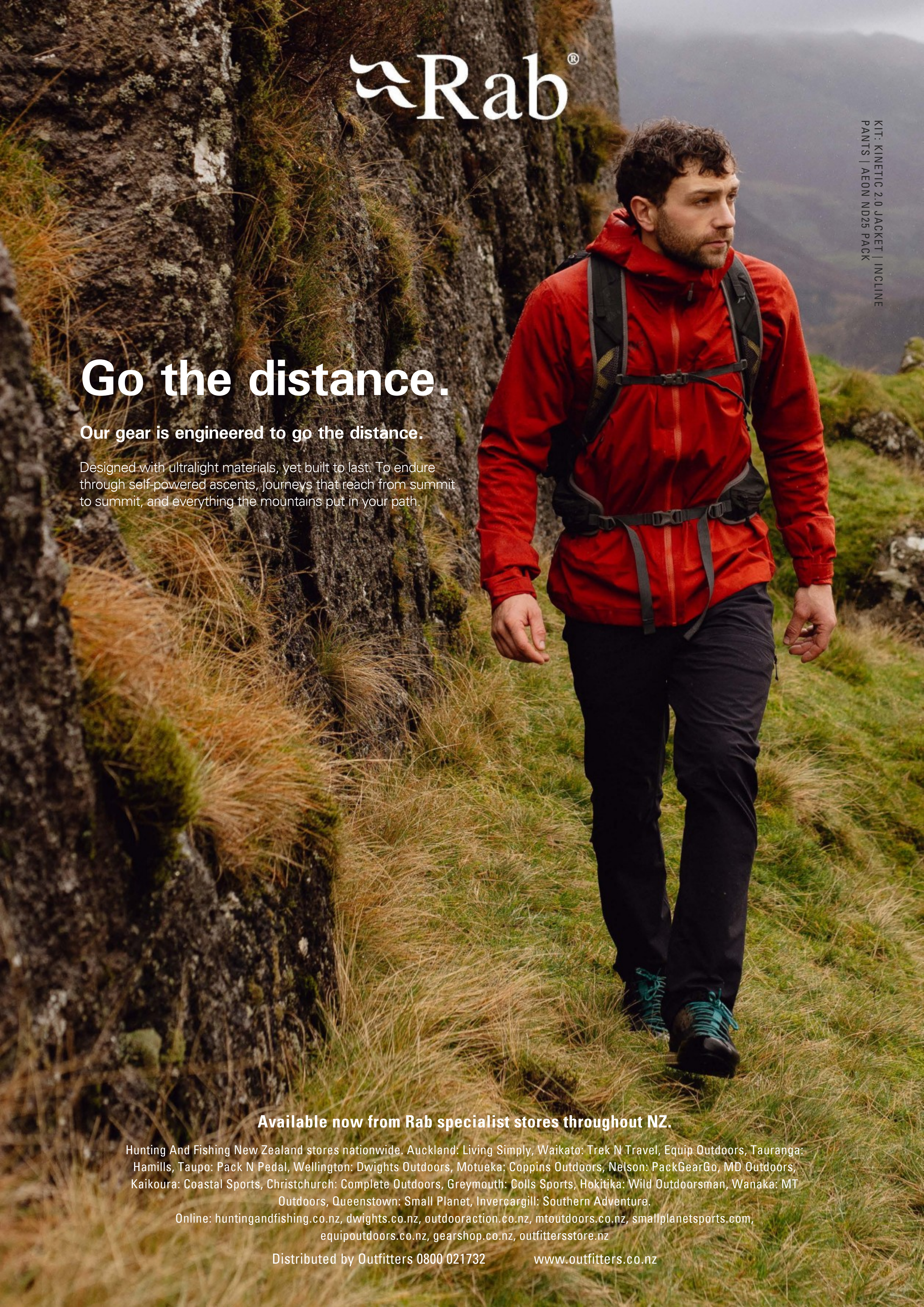

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SOLO: IN THE SOUTH POLE

Images by Jonny Huntington

From the start of his journey, Adventure magazine has followed Jonny Huntington, a stroke survivor from Devon. Today, we mark his history-making achievement as the first disabled person to ski solo and unsupported to the South Pole.

A Record-Breaking Feat

Jonny skied 911 kilometres across Antarctica, completing the trek in 45 days, 14 hours, and 15 minutes. Starting at the Fuchs-Messner Ice Shelf on 21st November, he reached the South Pole on 6th January. He is now one of just 52 people in history to ski to the South Pole without support—and the first with a disability to do so.

“This was harder than anything I’ve ever done,” Jonny said from the South Pole. “I’m exhausted, but I’m proud to prove that even with a disability, such challenges are possible.”

Brutal Conditions and Unseen Challenges

Pulling a 90-kilogram sled packed with food and gear, Jonny spent up to 11 hours a day skiing through Antarctic conditions. He faced temperatures dropping to -40°C, endless daylight, and tough terrain full of snow ridges and drifts. This season has been particularly harsh, with many other expeditions being called off. For Jonny, this was made even harder by the physical effects of his stroke. Left with limited mobility on his left side, the cold made every step more difficult, and falls were a constant obstacle.

“There were days I had to stop earlier than planned, either for safety or because my body had nothing left,” he explained. “The uneven snow and lack of control in my left ankle made progress slow at times. But I kept moving. I had to finish.”

Overcoming a Stroke to Rewrite Expectations

In 2014, at just 28, Jonny suffered a stroke that paralysed his left side. Through years of rehab, he regained partial mobility but continues to deal with the effects of brain damage. Tasks that would challenge an able-bodied adventurer became monumental for him. Jonny joined the army in 2013, training at Sandhurst to become an officer. In June 2014, just eight weeks after commissioning into the British Army, Jonny was in the gym where he suffered a devastating stroke. The neurological damage left Jonny paralysed down one side.

It took years of rehab before Jonny was able to fully walk again, and even then, he was left with significantly restricted movement down his left side.During his recovery Jonny became a member of the Armed Forces Para-Snowsport Team (AFPST), which fuelled his love of cross-country skiing.

This led to Jonny becoming one of the first athletes in a new GB Para Nordic ski team, where he competed from 2017 to 2020 at international level at World Cups in Lviv, Ukraine and Vuokatti, Finland, as well as the inaugural European Paralympic Committee Games in Poland in 2020. Para classifications and his unique

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physical limitations eventually made it impossible to compete at the highest levels, however this experience laid the foundations for his plans to be the first disabled explorer to reach the South Pole.

"This wasn't just a physical challenge. My neuro fatigue and mobility issues added a layer of difficulty that I had to work around every day," Jonny said. "But I never let that stop me. I hope this achievement proves to others that disability isn't the end of ambition."

A New Benchmark for Exploration
Steve Jones, Expedition Manager at Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions, called Jonny's success a milestone. "To ski to the South Pole alone and unsupported is one of the toughest challenges. For Jonny to do it with a disability shows incredible strength and determination. This achievement inspires far beyond the adventure world."

Supporting Key Causes
Jonny's expedition wasn't just personal—it raised funds for the Invictus Games Foundation, Armed Forces Para-Snowsport Team, Team Forces, and The Adaptive Grand Slam Foundation. To donate, visit givestar.io/gs/south-pole-solo-expedition.

Precision and Preparation
Jonny would like to thank the many people who have helped him to take on this challenge including his partners Specialist Risk Group, Team Forces, Collins Aerospace, ACRE Capital Real Estate, and Continuate.

Maj Gen Lamont Kirkland CBE, CEO Team Forces, added; "Team Forces is incredibly proud to support Jonny Huntingdon on his landmark Antarctic expedition to become the first disabled person to ski to the South Pole solo and unsupported.

"My hope is that this expedition will highlight that disability does not mean inability and no challenge is insurmountable. It's about confidence and self-belief."

"This challenge is more than just an adventure, it's a powerful message that anything is possible with the right training and mindset."

He'd also like to thank his technical partners Dynafit, Doxa Watches, JADAT Adventures, Salewa and SunGod Eyewear; and supporters Veeam, Dell, Pointwire, Comtech, Tila Capital, NSSLGlobal, Branding Science, Lidstones, and &SONS.

What's Next?
Jonny Huntington has shattered expectations and made history. As he reflects on this expedition, Adventure magazine will continue to follow his story. Whatever his next challenge, Jonny has proven that limits are meant to be pushed.

POU HERENGA TAI – **TWIN COAST** CYCLE TRAIL

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Northland

87km / 2 days
Opua to Kawakawa: 11km
Kawakawa to Kaikohe: 34km
Kaikohe to Okaihau: 14km
Okaihau to Horeke: 28km

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THE TRAIL

The Pou Herenga Tai Twin Coast Cycle Trail offers a scenic cross-country route from the Bay of Islands to Hokianga Harbour. This trail combines leisurely cycling with access to significant heritage sites and stories.

Riders can experience a diverse landscape, including coastlines, tranquil harbors, wetlands, native forests, and farmland, while passing through towns known for their rich history and hospitality.

The trail follows a mix of smooth rail tracks, cycle paths, wetland boardwalks, suspension bridges, and country roads. It can be ridden in either direction and broken into shorter day trips. The route provides a relaxing and rewarding experience, with opportunities to explore cultural sites and enjoy the subtropical climate of the Far North, known for its mild winters.

HOREKE KREATIONS

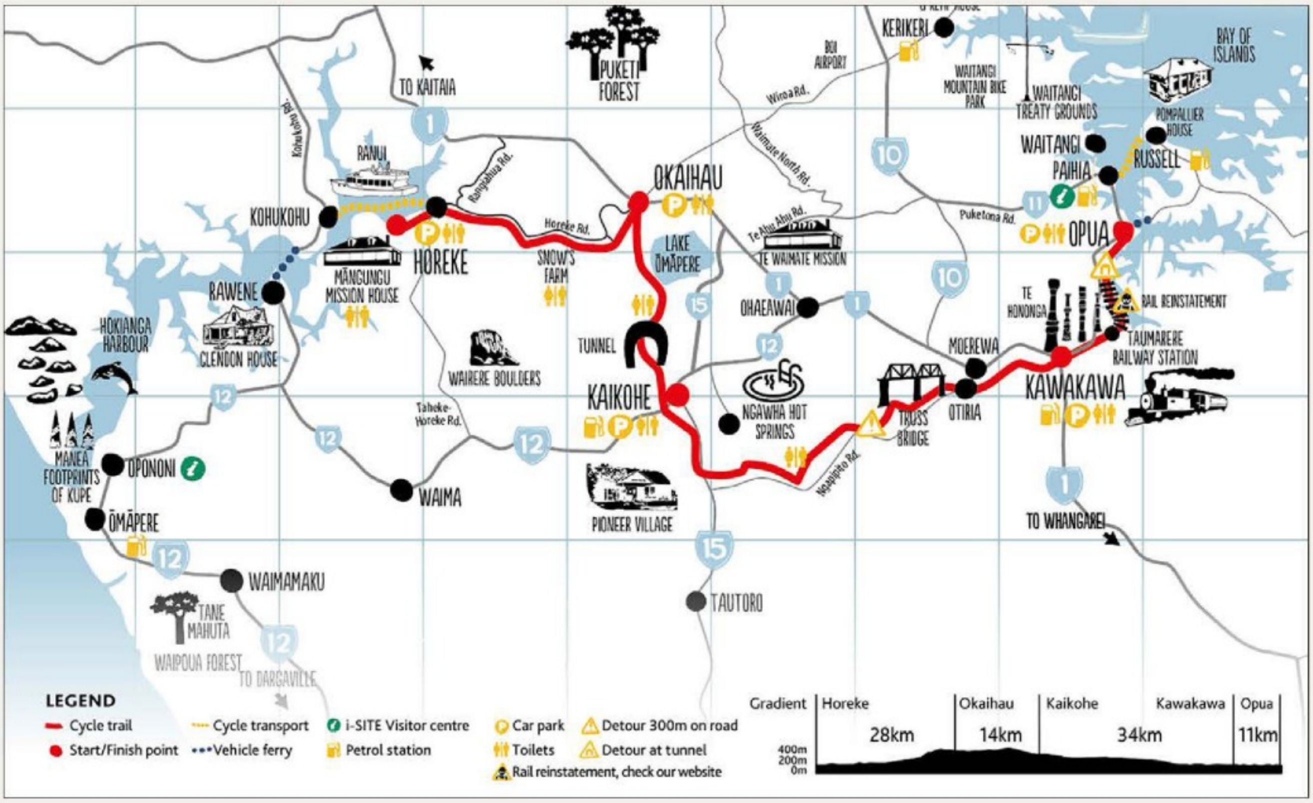
The trail's start and end towns are Kaikohe and Opua, but a Twin Coast adventure can be launched from anywhere along the trail including the towns of Kawakawa, Okaihau and Horeke; or nearby in Paihia, Russell, Kerikeri and other locations in the popular Bay of Islands.

NEED TO KNOW

Northland's sub-tropical climate makes for great cycling any time of the year, although riders should check the forecast and prepare accordingly. Note that, as the trail runs from one coast to the other, the weather can vary wildly in the same day. The trail can also get a bit sticky in places after heavy rain.

Cellphone coverage is good around larger towns and settlements but patchy between Kawakawa and Kaikohe, and Okaihau to Horeke.

For more information visit: **www.nzcycletrail.com**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"Travel also carries with it a sense of humility. Standing on the edge of a canyon carved over millennia or gazing at a glacier that has seen countless ages come and go, you’re reminded of your place in the grander scheme of things."

TRAVEL:
WHY IT'S GOOD FOR THE SOUL

Travel is an invitation to step beyond the comfortable limits of routine and venture into the unknown. It isn't just about seeing new places but about experiencing them, allowing the unfamiliar to shape your perspective. The rhythm of travel—marked by unfamiliar sights, sounds, and encounters—has a way of stripping away the static of daily life, leaving clarity in its wake.

"There's something transformative about being out of your element," says Lauren Vega, a long-time adventurer who has explored six continents. "You become more open, more aware, and more present. It's like waking up for the first time in a long time."

That 'wakefulness' is one of travel's great gifts. The act of leaving behind the predictable demands of modern life sharpens your senses. You notice details you'd normally miss: the play of sunlight on a remote mountain range, the chatter of unfamiliar birds in a foreign forest, the tang of salt air on a distant coastline. These moments ground you in the present and connect you to the world in ways that are impossible to replicate within the walls of an office or the confines of a schedule.

Adventure travel, in particular, offers a unique kind of immersion. When you find yourself trekking through dense rainforests, scaling rocky ridges, or navigating the sands of a desert, you are forced to engage fully with your surroundings. These landscapes demand respect; they reward curiosity. They are not there to entertain you—they exist with or without your presence. But by stepping into them, you learn to listen, to adapt, and to appreciate the world in its rawest form.

In these wild places, you often encounter challenges that force you to dig deeper into yourself. The storm that turns a day-long hike into a test of endurance, the unexpected detour that reshuffles plans—these moments of unpredictability push you out of your comfort zone. And in doing so, they teach you resilience.

"Adventure travel reminds you that you're capable of more than you think," says Tom Wilde, an experienced explorer who has tackled everything from Arctic expeditions to jungle treks. "It's not about conquering nature—it's about discovering what you're made of when you face it head-on."

Travel also carries with it a sense of humility. Standing on the edge of a canyon carved over millennia or gazing at a glacier that has seen countless ages come and go, you're reminded of your place in the grander scheme of things. It's a perspective shift that can't be achieved by staying within the familiar.

Another gift is the connections you make while travelling, both with people and places. Meeting locals whose lives are shaped by the landscapes you're exploring adds depth to your experience. Sharing a laugh with fellow travellers around a campfire turns strangers into companions. These interactions, brief as they might be, are part of what makes travel so enriching.

There's also the undeniable joy of discovery. Each new destination is a puzzle waiting to be solved, a story waiting to be told. The thrill of cresting a hill to find an untouched valley below, or stumbling upon a hidden café in a bustling city, stirs something primal. It awakens the innate curiosity that is often dulled by the repetition of daily life.

Travel is good for the soul because it encourages you to let go. It strips life back to essentials, reminding you of what truly matters. With fewer distractions, you find time for reflection. Away from the pressures of schedules and deadlines, you rediscover the luxury of time—time to think, to breathe, to simply be.

Of course, the stories you bring back are part of the magic. The sunrise you watched from a mountaintop, the laughter shared in a village square, the moment of awe as you stood beneath a sky so full of stars these remind you not just of where you've been but of what's possible.

Travel also instils a sense of responsibility. Experiencing the world's beauty comes with the recognition that it is fragile. It's impossible to witness a vibrant coral reef or trek through a pristine wilderness without feeling the urge to protect it. Travelling with intention, respecting the places you visit, and supporting local communities ensure that future generations can share in these experiences.

"When you travel, especially to remote or untouched places, you realise how interconnected everything is," says Jess Howard, a conservation advocate who has spent years travelling through national parks worldwide. "You see the impact of your choices in real time, and it changes the way you live, even when you return home."

The soul craves adventure not for the sake of adrenaline but for the deeper sense of meaning it brings. It thrives on the unfamiliar, the challenging, and the awe-inspiring. Travel fulfils that need in ways few other pursuits can. It reshapes your understanding of the world and, by extension, yourself.

Ultimately, travel is not just a physical act but a state of mind—a way of engaging with the world that prioritises curiosity, respect, and wonder. It reminds us that life is not measured in possessions or achievements but in experiences and connections.

The world is vast, unpredictable, and endlessly fascinating. And somewhere out there, a trail, a view, or a moment waits to remind you why travel is, indeed, good for the soul.

Ryan Lucas

Ryan Lucas (33) is a New Zealand-born adventurer and whitewater kayaker who has gained recognition for his daring feats exploring the world's most challenging rivers and remote wilderness areas. With a past passion for pushing the limits of his sport, Ryan has made a name for himself through paddling the world with numerous first descents including breaking the 100-foot mark.

Recently, Ryan has expanded his horizons by venturing into packrafting, combining the thrills of round venture with the challenges of remote wilderness travel. Whether paddling a kayak or packraft, Ryan's pursuit of adventure continues to take him into the heart of nature's wildest places.

George Snook

At 21, George Snook has built his life around New Zealand's rivers. As a whitewater kayaker and athlete, he's spent countless hours honing his skills, competing against the best in the world, and learning from the challenges each stretch of water presents.

For George, paddling is more than a sport; it's a way to connect with the land and share stories. When he's not training or competing, he's out exploring remote rivers and hidden corners of Aotearoa. Through his adventures, George hopes to spark a deeper appreciation for nature and encourage others to step outside and discover their own connections to the outdoors.

Whether carving through whitewater or floating down a calm stream, George feels at home on the water, embracing each moment with curiosity and respect for the natural world.

FIRST DESCENT:

PACKRAFTING VENTURE BARLOW RIVER

Words by Ryan Lucas
Images by Ryan Lucas and George Snook

It all began with a borrowed Packraft. I hopped into a cutting-edge Packraft! I was instantly amazed by how well it handled the harder whitewater, it shared a surprising resemblance to the hard-shell plastic whitewater kayaks. As I paddle down the river, my mind raced with the possibilities—this was no ordinary Packraft. The more I paddled, the more ideas bubbled up for future expeditions!

Fast forward seven months, and after a ton of research, countless hours on the water, and even a descent of Huka Falls, I set my sights on something bigger: the untouched Barlow River, nestled in the rugged wilderness of the Whataroa area on New Zealand's South Island. To make it happen, I needed a worthy paddling partner, someone with the experience skill-set to take on the adventure. Enter Geo Snook, a good friend and a world class kayaker with a good sense of adventurer, who eagerly committed to join me on this incredible journey, ready to test both our skills and the limits of these Packrafts. What followed was nothing short of extraordinary.

Day 1: The Climb Begins
After poring over topo maps and information about the Adams Wilderness Area, we got lucky. Word reached us about an old alpine trail that could help start us off and put us in the right direction for our put in point of the Barlow River! By dawn, we were off, taking the trail that led us uphill, cutting through tussock-filled terrain, and up towards the flat valleys below Mt. Adams.

It did catch us off guard a little with its shared gradient/steepness and hard alpine tussock terrain! On top of that we were having to adapt fast to our 30kg + packs equipment with our packrafts, whitewater & mountaineering equipment. To say the least it was hard work physically and we were both suffering from a very early stage. We spent around 12 hours hiking that day before setting camp right below our highest point of the trip, 1850m. We were rewarded with a stunning sunset view across the West Coast!

The long climb

Isolation is a big part of the draw card

> "*The route was sketchy at best, with no marked tracks and a steep ridge leading us towards Mt. Adams and the Escape Glacier.*"

Day 2: Into the Alpine Wilderness
We woke to a frosty morning, with all our gear covered in a thin layer of ice, so we opted to hold off, letting the warmth slowly melt the frost. By the time the sun had hit us, we were fully equipped and ready to set off for the day. We were now in uncharted terrain and off the cut alpine trail. Our route, though still steep and daunting, was once again visible. The route was sketchy at best, with no marked tracks and a steep ridge leading us towards Mt. Adams and the Escape Glacier. But, as the weather changed rapidly, a heavy cloud cover rolled in, obscuring our line of sight. For a moment, we lost our sense of direction. We paused, let the fog lift, and then, as luck would have it, the skies cleared and we gained full line of site of our descent down, the descent being the pivotal moment of the hike! We navigate our way down snow-packed ridges and onto the Escape Glacier. It was grueling and had us both on edge! But we were now out of the snowpack alpine conditions, much to our relief.

We were then met with thick tussock grass and mini tributary streams, and hidden bluffs scattered the land, forcing us to constantly backtrack and reassess our route. Each obstacle seemed to stretch our patience further, and at times, we found ourselves wondering if the day would ever end. Exhausted, we finally found a camp spot for the night and had a full visual of our put-in point. From this vantage point, we could see the river where we had put in! In the grand scheme of the adventure, we now felt this was just within reach. Tomorrow, we would finally be on the water.

Day 3: The Final Descent and First Gorge
After a good night's rest, we were back on the move by 7 am. At this point, we were within 1 km of the river, but the terrain was no less difficult. We had to navigate through dense bush, threading the needle to avoid being bluffed or cliffed out. The steepness was so intense at one point that we had to rappel our packs down. After about five hours of sheer physical strain, we finally reached the riverside tributary, just 50 meters from the main confluence of the Barlow River, our put-in point! After nearly 25 hours of hiking, we were both relieved and exhausted to be at our starting point, though we still faced a major decision: should we drop into the top of Crux Gorge, which we had originally planned to portage.

We took a moment to scout the area with a drone and get a better visual of the gorge. It looked manageable, and after discussing it, we both decided to paddle through the Crux Gorge of the Barlow. Nervous but optimistic, we geared up and dropped in. Geo led the charge, navigating the tight walls that rapidly closed in around us. The walls began to pinch in, becoming vertical in places, and we soon encountered our first major rapid, the crux of the entire trip.

This rapid was essentially a sheer drop waterfall, followed by a washing machine-like hydraulic. It was portageable, but it looked incredibly difficult. The move was clean but risky, and George was determined. He made the call: "Let's go for it, we've got this." George dropped first, with me in my packraft above, watching closely. He hit the line cleanly, and I followed, cleaning the line with a huge sense of relief.

We were now deep in a canyon-like gorge, boxed in by steep walls. There was a small, micro-eddy, (an eddy meaning- upstream current that can help you navigate difficult sections). George gave me the nod, signaling that I should go for it. Getting into the eddy wasn't too tricky, but getting out of my packraft and onto the shoreline proved more challenging. Somehow, I managed to make it safely, followed by George, who I guided with a sling rope.

We continued downstream, portaging the next rapid, slowly working our way out of the crux section. The whitewater began to improve, and we were treated to some pristine, untouched clean whitewater, this is what we had come for! Spirits were high, and we were stoked as we ran around 2 kilometers of classic whitewater through stunning wilderness.

By 7:00 p.m., we found the perfect campsite beside the river and called it a day. I was absolutely shattered but beyond happy to be at camp, reflecting on a day of intense challenges and very rewarding whitewater!

Navigating one of the many rapids in the canyon-like gorge

Dramatic scenery is everywhere in this region

Day 4: Final Descent and Unexpected Competition

We woke to our fourth and final day, homeward bound! By now, we were in familiar territory, as West Coast local Barney Young had caught wind of our journey into the Barlow. Eager to ensure two North Islanders didn’t claim the full first descent, Barney, joined by whitewater legend, Keith Riley, decided to hike in from the upstream approach, essentially the opposite route we had taken. They set off on the same day we started our hike, and by the time we were putting in, they had already made it to within two or so kilometers of our start point and completed their trip. We kept in touch via the InReach, so we had this intel in real-time. While we weren't sure exactly what rapids they'd run or portage, we were ready to set out for our fourth and final day.

The day began with a few portages before we hit one of the trip’s best rapids, a stunning, ramping double drop! From there, we were treated to a series of clean, thrilling rapids as well as a small waterfall-like drop. We covered about 4 kilometers of the Barlow River before reaching a key landmark, the confluence with the Perth River. The whitewater on the Perth took us by surprise, it was a bit more intense than we had anticipated.

From the Perth, we paddled into the final confluence with the Whataroa River, where we faced 5 kilometers of Class III rapids to the takeout. By the time we reached our takeout point, we were completely exhausted but high on life. We had done it, we had completed what we set out to achieve!

Birds eye-view of how insignificant we can look

One of the rapids on our 18km river journey

Reflection: A True First Descent
In total, we hiked 12 km, with over 25 hours of physical exertion. On the water, we covered 18 km, breaking it down to 5km on the Barlow River, 6km on the Perth River, and 7km on the Whataroa River.

Both Geo and I agreed that, while this adventure had been one of the most rewarding, it was also one of the toughest and that we'd likely never take on again, at least not in quite the same way.

The physical toll of carrying 30+ kg packs over such rugged terrain was extreme, and it certainly tested both our physical and mental limits. But with that challenge came an intense sense of satisfaction. The raw, unspoiled wilderness of the Barlow River, the adrenaline of the whitewater, and the joy of discovery were everything we had hoped for. Our minds are already spinning with ideas for the next adventure.

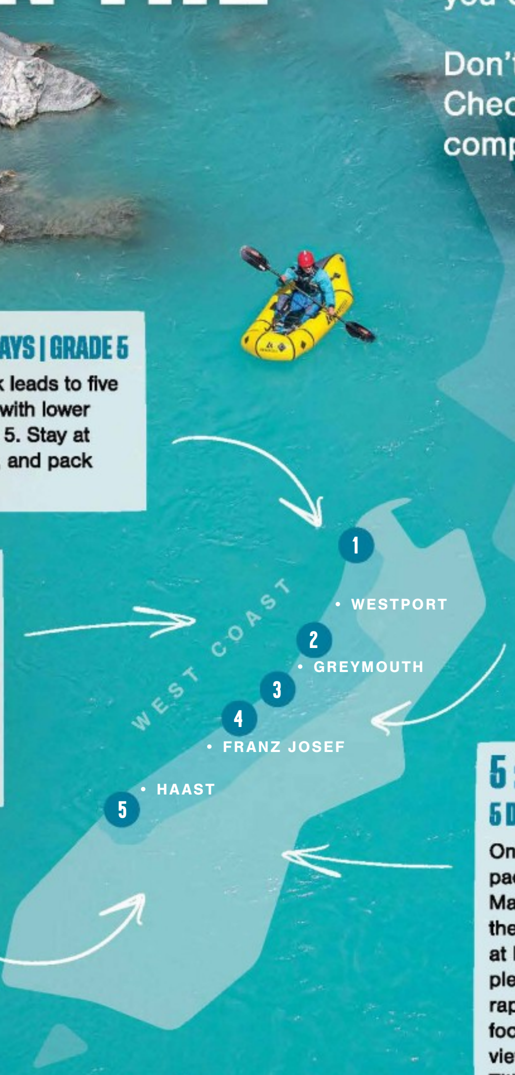
The world of Packrafting has a lot more to offer, and we're ready to see where it takes us next.

The Barlow River is a river in the Westland district of the South Island of New Zealand.

5 CLASSIC PACKRAFTING TRIPS ON THE COAST

From easy day floats to week long epics with hard access and serious whitewater, the West Coast has got you covered for any sort of packrafting mission you could imagine.

Don't know where to start? Check out these classic missions, compiled by *Dan Clearwater.*



1 : KARAMEA

7 DAYS | GRADE 5

Two days tramping on the Wangapeka track leads to five very challenging days on the river. Starting with lower volume grade 3, it peaks at high flow grade 5. Stay at several of the nine cosy huts along the way, and pack your fishing rod!

2 : FOX

1 DAY | GRADE 2

The Inland Pack Track takes you up valley, beneath towering limestone cliffs to the emerald waters of the Fox River. Avoiding the pile of boulders about midway through the river, the paddle is scenic and fun for new packrafters.

3 : HOKITIKA

1-2 DAYS | GRADE 2-3

Beyond the crowds at the famous swing bridge is a brilliant packrafting river with a big water feel. Do it as a day trip or stay the night at Rapid Creek Hut. Begin on easier water lower down or hike further up for some grade 3 action. The choice is yours on the Hokitika!

4 : WHATAROA

1 DAY | GRADE 2+

Glacial blue water and large wave trains make this an exciting day trip for competent beginners. The rapids aren't technical, you just have to pick your line and keep paddling for balance through the waves! Advance permission is needed as the DOC track begins across private farmland.

5 : WAIATOTO

5 DAYS | GRADE 3 TO 4

One of the ultimate South Westland packrafting journeys. Starting from Makarora, it takes three days to reach the Waiatoto, crossing the main divide at Pearson Saddle. On the river, there's plenty of flat water, but several grade 4 rapids and enough grade 3 to keep you focussed! Glance back if you dare, for views of the north flanks of Mt Aspiring / Tititea and the Olivine Wilderness area as you paddle for two days to the coast.

Whataroa River @packraftingnewzealand

But please...respect the power of these rivers. Even the 'easy' trips require whitewater safety knowledge and equipment.

You'll find contacts for courses, guides, rental gear and ways to connect with other packrafters, plus detailed information about all these trips on packraftingtrips.nz.

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THE GROWING THREAT:

UNDERSTANDING OVERTOURISM

Over the last ten years, “overtourism” has become a buzzword in global travel discussions. The issue gained momentum as international tourism doubled between 2000 and 2019. By 2024, tourist arrivals are expected to surpass pre-pandemic levels, reigniting concerns over overcrowded destinations, strained resources, and environmental degradation.

Overtourism, at its core, occurs when destinations face more visitors than they can sustainably manage. This issue isn’t limited to sprawling cities like Venice or ancient landmarks like Cambodia’s Angkor Wat—it extends to remote beaches, islands, and natural parks. As the global tourism industry surges back post-COVID, we’re left with a pressing challenge: how can we continue exploring the world without destroying the places we love?

Defining the Problem

Overtourism doesn’t have a universal threshold—it varies based on a destination’s capacity to handle visitors sustainably. Factors like infrastructure, local resources, environmental resilience, and community sentiments determine how many visitors are “too many.” The consequences, however, are clear: overcrowding, wear and tear on natural and cultural heritage, environmental destruction, and discontent among locals.

The Costs of Overcrowding

When hordes of tourists descend on a single spot, the experience degrades for visitors and locals alike. Ancient cities like Dubrovnik and Venice face clogged streets, long queues, and constant noise. Meanwhile, fragile rural and island destinations, such as Maui’s Road to Hana or Santorini, grapple with traffic jams and damaged landscapes.

Even heritage sites suffer. Angkor Wat’s 900-year-old stone steps erode under the footsteps of millions, while graffiti and climbing damage its intricate carvings. Without active conservation efforts, sites like this risk being loved to death.

Communities Bear the Brunt

The economic benefits of tourism often fail to trickle down to local communities. Residents find themselves priced out of housing markets in many hotspots as short-term rentals cater to higher-paying tourists. Local businesses struggle against external investors who reap most profits, leaving communities resentful. Protests in cities like Barcelona and Mallorca highlight the growing frustration, as residents chant slogans like “Tourists go home,” demanding a more balanced approach to tourism.

Environmental and Resource Strain

Tourism doesn’t just stress infrastructure—it strains the environment. Resorts and cruise ships drain water supplies, generate waste, and damage ecosystems. In Thailand, Maya Bay’s coral reefs suffered severe degradation, leading to its closure for recovery. Meanwhile, Mount Everest’s base camps are littered with trash, posing health risks to climbers and locals alike as waste contaminates water sources.

> *"Tourism doesn’t just stress infrastructure, it strains the environment. Resorts and cruise ships drain water supplies, generate waste, and damage ecosystems."*

The Causes Behind Overtourism

Several factors fuel the overtourism crisis:

1. Economic Growth in Emerging Markets: Rapid development in countries like China and India has enabled millions to travel. In 2019 alone, Chinese tourists accounted for over 150 million international trips, a staggering increase from 10 million in 2000.
2. Affordable Travel: Budget airlines and online travel agencies make international trips accessible to the middle class. Airfares have dropped dramatically, with inflation-adjusted prices in 2024 averaging $388 USD (down from $525 in 1995).
3. Social Media Influence: Platforms like Instagram have turned once-hidden gems into global hotspots. Destinations like Chefchaouen in Morocco and Bali's Tegallalang Rice Terraces are now synonymous with picture-perfect moments, often to the detriment of the local experience.
4. Short-Term Rentals: Services like Airbnb disrupt housing markets in tourist-heavy cities, reducing available rentals for locals and driving up costs. Yet, when regulated, these platforms can redistribute tourists to lesser-known areas.
5. Cruise Tourism: Mega-ships carrying thousands of passengers at once overwhelm small ports. Although cruises bring visitors, they often spend minimally onshore, offering limited benefits to local economies.

Towards Sustainable Solutions

Tackling overtourism demands innovative strategies and cooperative efforts between governments, businesses, and communities. Sustainable tourism planning must balance visitor numbers with the preservation of natural and cultural resources while ensuring economic benefits reach residents.

> *"Overtourism is the dark shadow of the modern travel boom, threatening the very destinations adventurers cherish."*

Tools like carrying capacity studies, environmental impact assessments, and community feedback surveys are crucial. Some destinations, such as Thailand, have started limiting access to fragile ecosystems, while cities like Amsterdam are taxing tourists to fund infrastructure improvements.

For travellers, the responsibility lies in making conscious choices—choosing off-peak seasons, respecting local customs, and seeking lesser-known destinations that disperse tourism's impact. Together, these efforts can protect our world's wonders for future generations.

How the World Is Fighting Back Against Overtourism

Overtourism is the dark shadow of the modern travel boom, threatening the very destinations adventurers cherish. Whether it's preserving historic cities or protecting wild landscapes, many regions are stepping up with innovative strategies to safeguard their future.

Destinations Leading the Charge

Some of the world's most popular travel hotspots are rewriting the rulebook to keep tourism sustainable and authentic:

- Amsterdam has cracked down on river cruises and banned new hotel construction to relieve overcrowding in its famous canals and streets.
- Dubrovnik, in Croatia, now limits the number of cruise ships docking daily, helping its cobbled old town breathe again.
- Barcelona plans to ban short-term holiday rentals, tackling soaring housing costs that have squeezed out residents.

Tourist flood the Grand Canyon

The Greek Island's traffic jam

> *"By embracing innovative solutions and spreading the tourism load, we can ensure that the world's most treasured destinations remain vibrant and authentic."*

Even iconic natural sites are taking action. Arches National Park in Utah rolled out a timed entry system to manage crowds and reduce queue chaos. Closer to home, New Zealand's own Great Walks employ booking systems that ensure these tracks stay pristine and welcoming for all.

In other cases, bold moves are redirecting travellers altogether. Venice introduced a day-tripper fee to ease peak-time pressure. Meanwhile, Japan installed barriers to block overexposed Instagram views of Mt. Fuji, nudging visitors to discover less-trodden trails.

Fresh Tactics to Shift the Balance
Some cities and regions are using creative approaches to encourage better behaviour and spread out the tourist load:

- Copenhagen rewards eco-conscious visitors—those using public transport or participating in litter clean-ups—with free meals and cultural experiences.
- Florence launched a campaign to teach visitors how to respect local customs, and art..
- France is promoting lesser-known gems, encouraging travellers to explore beyond hotspots like Paris and Provence.

Ecotourism Taxes: A Necessary Trade-Off
Tourist taxes aren't new, but a growing wave of targeted ecotourism fees is funding efforts to preserve what makes these destinations special.

- Bali now charges visitors 150,000 rupiah (~$16 NZD) to support sustainability initiatives, including water conservation—an urgent need given a tourist's daily water consumption can exceed 1,785 litres, compared to just 14 litres for locals.
- Hakone, Japan, and other destinations are also considering tourism levies to address rising visitor numbers and their impacts.

> *"The battle against overtourism is far from over, but the global response offers hope for a more sustainable future."*

These taxes are often reinvested into conservation projects, infrastructure improvements, and education programmes, ensuring travellers contribute to the places they visit.

Controlled Access to Protect Fragile Environments
Some regions are limiting physical access to manage visitor impacts:

- Marseilles introduced a reservation system for Calanques National Park to protect fragile coves. The scheme has been so effective it's now in place for four more years.
- On the Amalfi Coast, non-residents can only drive the scenic roads on specific days, reducing traffic congestion and pollution.

The battle against overtourism is far from over, but the global response offers hope for a more sustainable future. As cities, natural sites, and entire nations adopt bold measures, they're not just protecting destinations but reshaping the travel experience itself. From limiting cruise ship arrivals to implementing tourist levies and educating visitors, these strategies show that tourism doesn't have to come at the expense of culture, community, or the environment.

For adventurers, this is a call to rethink how we travel. It's about choosing quality over quantity, exploring responsibly, and respecting the places and people that make our journeys extraordinary. Supporting destinations prioritising sustainability isn't just an ethical choice—it's an investment in ensuring future generations .

The road ahead requires collaboration between governments, local communities, and travellers. But the message is clear: the days of unchecked tourism are over. By embracing innovative solutions and spreading the tourism load, we can ensure that adventure doesn't lose its heart—and that the world's most treasured destinations remain vibrant and authentic.

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Vuadomo Village

FIJI: THE SUBTLE ART OF REGENERATION

Words by Steve Dickinson
Images compliments of Adventure Travel Trade Association - Kristen Kellogg

The blackness of the Fijian night is held at bay by a soft yellow light of some low-voltage illumination hanging somewhere close by. The sulu curtain is slowly, even meekly, drawn back, and through the haze that is the bright pink mosquito net, I see Maria move slowly towards the bed.

As I continue to feign sleep, she gently rearranges the mosquito netting away from the bed, so it falls neatly. To make sure the night's little creatures do not plague those in her care. It is 3 am, and this is the second nocturnal investigation, ensuring the mosquito netting is still in place. An hour or so later, it is still hot and dark; now not even the bugs are awake. You can hear her stirring a tin pot, cutting something and humming a little song. I stick my head around the corner and smile.

The darkness of the morning is pushed back by her radiant white smile, “Go back to sleep, Mr Steve; I make breakfast bread,’ and she points back to the makeshift bedroom with a dough-encrusted finger. As instructed, I head back and negotiate the folds of my bright pink mosquito net, and await the cacophony of a thousand chickens, the barking dogs and the cries of a newborn baby that will herald the start of the morning in Vuadomo Village.

If you know me, you know I am a fluffy towel, minibar, and Sky TV type of guy. Yet, on advice, I put my name down for a ‘Regenerative’ expedition to Vanua Levu, the second biggest island in Fiji and an hour's flight from Nadi. Only once I had feedback on the itinerary and what to expect in a Fijian village did my fluffy towel phobia start to kick in. ‘Good’ travel is when a trip meets your expectations; ‘Fun’ travel is when your trip meets and goes beyond your expectations; and ‘Great’ travel is when the unexpected surpasses your wildest expectations.

Tourism is the backbone of the economy of many countries, not just the small South Pacific islands. Even developed nations like New Zealand rely heavily on tourism. However, the tourism ‘income bucket’ can have some serious holes, and many destinations bleed that tourism income back offshore. Through foreign ownership, a lack of integration with local communities, and a lack of long-term vision by local communities. This is often accompanied by damage to the local environment and the depletion of environmental assets. Often, overseen because it's not an obvious resource, culture itself is often marginalised and, at best, exploited.

The cruise ship ‘The Princess Big Spend’ might arrive at your local dock, and two thousand people walk off in the morning, buy a trinket or a t-shirt, and then head back on board for lunch. The numbers look good on paper for the tourism sector but do nothing too little for the local community or environment. It is like consuming a sugar rush; that can of Red Bull might look good and taste great, but the high is short-lived, corrosive and addictive. The sugar rush concept and quick money seem attractive, but you would have been better off considering a more long-term form of nutrition that can sustain you beyond the monetary sugar rush and lay a foundation for a future.

Enter the concept of ‘Regenerative Tourism;’ I prefer the word regenerative travel, because tourism sounds and is often fleeting. Destinations such as Fiji, tourism has been portrayed as the bikini-clad white girl, on a white sand beach, drinking a cocktail under a palm tree, possibly served by a smiling Fijian. The real interpretation of that is a week in the sun, in a foreign-owned resort, on a manufactured beach, under a ‘pruned’ palm tree (everyone knows you never sit under a palm tree – falling coconuts hurt); that is commercial tourism, sure it has its place, but it is not sustainable.

Vaudomo village from the top of the hill

> *"Regenerative tourism enables communities, environments, and ecosystems to evolve, renew, and restore."*

Regenerative tourism/travel is simply locally integrated sustainable tourism, a tourism format that minimises tourism's social and environmental impact while generating much-needed economic growth. Regenerative tourism enables communities, environments, and ecosystems to evolve, renew, and restore. Working with local communities aligns tourism's needs with nature, and it benefits economically, socially, culturally, ecologically, and for the long term.

'Duavata' in Fijian means 'working together.' We were met by both Fiji Tourism and the Duavata Collective, a group of individual operators and companies dedicated to the need for a regulated approach to tourism. A regenerative approach. We were greeted by the ever smiling, 'nothing is a problem', Epeli Asaro, who runs Muanivatu Trails. The introduction on their website sums up their approach better than words I could write.

"We are a community-driven effort dedicated to promoting sustainable development. Our guiding principle is to ensure that every step we take benefits the local communities we work with. From the artisans who create authentic Fijian crafts to the villagers who share their ancestral wisdom, your visit supports a thriving local economy."

Labasa Airport in Vanua Levu is not LAX, but it possibly has more smiling people. On the first day, the short ride from the airport to Vuadomo village was a trip through traditional farmland and dense rainforest. We had been briefed on village etiquette but not how welcomed you felt. Smiles and handshakes, hugs, and more smiles. After a brief meeting with the elders in the community building and a brief kava ceremony (that we would return to later). We were allocated to our homestay and then escorted to our rooms.

When you don't have a lot, a little means a lot. The homestay had little to work with, a corrugated iron home and a makeshift kitchen, but they had done all they could; the place was scrupulously clean with cute made-up beds with flowers in every nook and cranny. Maria, our host, introduced her children, one at a time, of which there were many, and from that moment on, during our every waking hour, we had a personal row of ducklings following our every move.

As dusk appeared in the evening sky, we were taken up to the local waterfall to swim and to be fed a local feast among flaming torches and the sounds cascading waterfall. Each dish was explained in detail: where it came from, how it was gathered, how it was made, how it was eaten and often what it was good for. The evening was full of more singing, talking, and kava, more singing and cultural dancing, more kava, and an overwhelming feeling of being truly welcomed and belonging. As the moon rose and the carousel of birds slowly quietened, a peacefulness came over the village, and we returned to our accommodation.

Awakened by the morning chorus of dogs and chickens and laughing children, we had time to visit the village and talk to the villagers; some had been there their whole lives and were content to stay. I asked one woman, as she dealt with a small pile of coconuts, if she wanted to see more of the world, and she asked, 'Why would I?' Now, that is not an easy question to answer in such an idyllic place of such simplicity without sounding like materialistic arse. She wielded a large, very sharp machete and flipped the top off a coconut, like we would open a milk bottle; smiled at my discomfort, handed it to me, and walked to breakfast.

Unfortunately, you can't do everything, and we had time constraints at Vuadomo. Still, if we had the chance to stay longer, part of visiting the village would have been being involved in their day-to-day living, planting taro, gathering crops, cooking and fishing. Sadly, we had to leave. This type of integration is not an education you will get from an ever-present resort fire

L-R: Kava welcome ceremony, Village ladies showing what they have made, Smiling Fiji kids playing, Pei Lee eating more donuts

> *"When you don't have a lot, a little means a lot."*

Nukubati lunch sandbar

Nukubati Morning

dancer at your curated resort. This is not the brochure of 10 Fijian popular sayings; this is how the local people live and have lived for centuries. Although basic, it has an appeal far beyond tourism; it is the essence of travel, of being integrated into a community, if only briefly, to understand their life and thus better understand your own.

As we left Vuadomo village, we felt sad; it was like leaving friends after a visit that seemed too short. Everyone had their own special moments, not about the environment but about a connection. We then travelled over the high ranges to the opposite side of our destination, Nukubati Island Resort.

Nukubati is a quintessential 'secluded island resort.' If you had to list the prerequisites for a secluded island paradise: white sand beach, clear blue water, an abundance of fish, proximity to the beach, lush vegetation, idyllic beachfront bungalows, and smiling, happy staff, your list would be complete.

We had already met Jenny, the owner. Sometimes, when you meet someone, you have that instant connection. She is a force to be reckoned with, a delightful mixture of no-nonsense, get-things done, and a warm, caring, motherly nature, not just for her guests but also for her staff and the community, and a genuine deep passion for the land.

But beyond its Nukubati idyllic Pacific charm, Nukibati stands out as a pioneer of sustainable tourism. Jenny and Peter Bourke are the visionaries behind Nukubati, and they transformed this island into a world standard of eco-friendly hospitality over three decades ago. Long before sustainability became popular, mainstream and a selling point. They envisioned installing Fiji's first solar plant, featuring 72 2V lead-acid batteries and a custom-built inverter. (Peter's engineering background helped) This system powered the resort for 26 years before being upgraded in 2016 to a more efficient model.

Sustainability drives every aspect of Nukubati. A solar-powered desalination plant ensures freshwater supply during dry seasons, complemented by rainwater harvesting and UV filtration. Hot water is generated via solar heaters. Wastewater is sterilised using UV light and reused to nourish the lush gardens. If it can be reused, repurposed, reclaimed, or recycled, they have found a way to capitalise on it.

There is an overwhelming feeling of family at Nukubati, which is at the heart of the regenerative attitude. It is less about the 'sugar rush' of profit and more focused on the long-term sustainability and maintenance of the land, the people, and the culture. Jenny and Peter have been building their vision of hospitality for over 30 years, and some of their staff have been beside them all those years, so it is not just leadership that drives Nukubati but a buy-in from the whole community to see the value and worth of a regenerative approach.

Nukubati is not just a shining light of sustainability; it is a functioning, successful resort. It offers some of the most amazing diving in the world on the Great Sea Reef, snorkelling trips for non-divers, river kayaking, and water activities. Meals are literally a feast, and the standard of service is second to none.

As we left in the bright yellow boats of Nukubati, with the staff singing their 'farewell—return soon' song, we felt a real sense of 'it can be done and done successfully' and that tourism does not have to be at the cost of the environment, it can be inclusive of the local community and it can have positive longevity. Jenny and Peter have proven that you can do it; you just need the vision and the fortitude to see it through.

The essence of regenerative tourism is summed up simply with the first words that open the Nukubati website.
At Nukubati, we believe in protecting and preserving the natural beauty that surrounds us. We strive to operate in a way that minimizes our environmental impact.

We take responsibility for the well-being of our local community.

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WILD WEST WANDERINGS:

EXPLORING THE BIBBULMUN TRACK

Words by Eric Skilling

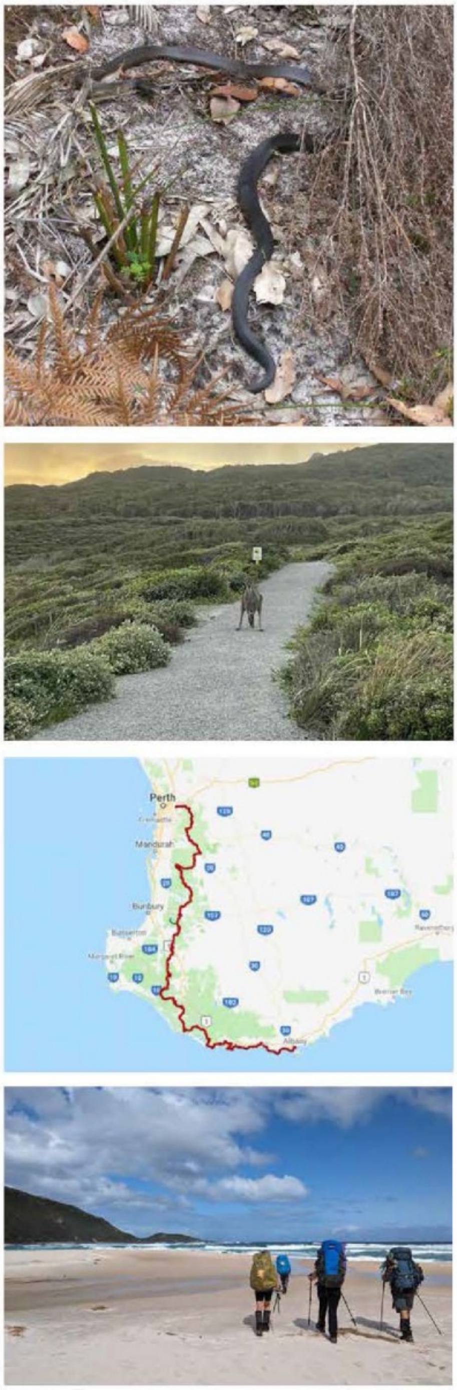

Image compliments of Bibbulmun Track Foundation

Top to bottom: the wild west coast !

Neither of us moved. Surprisingly, and despite the tension I felt no sense of wild panic. My heart was racing but there was no urge to turn and run. We stared at the creature, only a few metres of sandy track between us and those hidden fangs. The lines of each black scale glistened in the sunlight as it lay on the edge of the track, gazing up at my sister. A tiny head, which seemed bizarrely out of proportion to the rest of the body, slowly but very deliberately swivelled away from my sister, and the glassy eyes locked on me. The tingle in my chest brightened and I took extra breaths. The need to step back did cross my mind but strangely I stayed stationary – although things may have changed quickly had it shown any signs of striking. Thankfully only the head moved while the slender shiny serpent lay still. The seconds ticked by, and then it turned again, looking back at my sister.

Moments earlier she had walked past within inches of the dugite before realising what it was and yelling out to me to stop. The two of us now stood mere metres apart, unmoving, wide-eyed, looking at one of the world's most venomous snakes lying close by. It was as fascinated as we were. Considering the tiny cranium was incapable of holding a brain bigger than the tip of my small finger, it made sense that the dugite was probably wondering exactly what had disturbed the morning meander.

Annoyingly my camera was tucked away in the top pocket of my pack. I slowly, and hopefully calmly, slid my hand under a shoulder strap and gently lowered my pack to the ground. Before I could reach the zip, the dugite made one last final inspection of us both, lowered its head, and slithered into the ankle-high scrub alongside the sandy track.

"Well," I said, "we had been promised we might come across a couple of snakes a day, but instead we had to wait three whole days." It was spring, the peak season for snake "romantic" rendezvous, and they were on the move, seeking out partners. With all the benefit of hindsight, I had thrived on the thrill of this single encounter, but daily encounters with these reptiles might have been too much for this snake-weary antipodean. Entirely understandable considering I originate from a land where the greatest threat is the bite of the mighty sandfly.

We planned to walk the 127km section of the Bibbulmun Track from Walpole to Denmark on the South Coast of Western Australia. This section is described as offering the most diverse terrain and vegetation. We came away feeling the experience was unsurpassed in comparison to other walks available on the continent and even, dare I say it, Tasmania. Add in a bit of whale watching, blue-tongue lizards, wallabies and kangaroos, raucous birds, and of course the inevitable reptiles, arachnids and one rat (more on that later) added unique experiences and excitement, especially for this visitor from the shaky isles.

Even knowing the region receives over a metre of rainfall a year, I was still surprised at the lushness and variety of trees in the forests. On the inland section karri, peppermint and bottlebrush trees were towered over by the red tingle trees. We enjoyed a kaleidoscope of colour from the thousands of wildflowers that were blooming at the time. Spotting strangely shaped and multi-coloured orchids became so common that they almost became unnewsworthy.

We took the opportunity to visit the Valley of The Giants and climbed onto the 40-metre-high platform for the unique views from above. Once out of the forests, however, the contrast in ground cover was dramatic. The tranquil forests are replaced with wind-ravaged coastal shrubs and bushes, sometimes just ankle-high as they strive to survive in this wilderness.

Author, Eric Skilling, getting up and close to giant tingle trees.jpg

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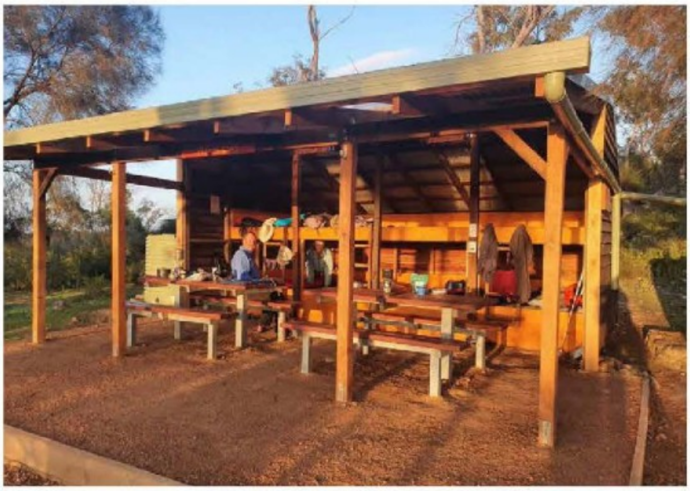
Janet keeping dry on one of the few unbridged rivers

Granite boulders at Elephant Rock made for a great place to catch up with family



Atmosphere created by the 3-sided huts added to the outdoor expereince Photo Sandra Dee

Catching up with Janet's family 40 metres above the trees

The coastline itself ranges from high weathered cliffs to small bays protected by massive granite boulders, and then curved beaches of fine white sand. We came across an angler on Conspicuous Beach, one of the few people we saw on the track. After a brief chat, he proudly opened the rear door of his 4WD to reveal his catch - a Spanish mackerel the length of a young child. I could not help but admire his casting skills, let alone catching and landing the fish.

Standing on the cliff tops at Rame Head leaves you in no doubt that this is a high-energy coastline. Nothing but the ocean stands between yourself and the fearsome storms of Antarctica. Relentless sets of massive swells surge north across the Southern Ocean and attack these ancient limestone cliffs in a cacophony of deep booms and a crescendo of salt spray. “King waves” arrive with such regularity that creeping forward between sets for that perfect photo is about as sensible as a game of snake-stroking. Bizarrely, we noticed a pod of dolphins hunting twenty or so metres from these cliffs, unperturbed by the rush and confusion of water around them.

It was not until we reached the kayaking section across Irwin Inlet that I got up and close to a large arachnid in the worst possible situation. Four-metre kayaks are provided at both sides of the lagoon, with the arrangement that each kayak is returned to the side from which it was initially picked up. Chivalrously, I agreed to paddle back with our two kayaks attached to the third kayak I had picked up from the other side. Having diligently inspected every nook and cranny of my original vessel for anything that crept, crawled, or slithered, I overlooked this step before climbing into the third kayak for the return leg.

Halfway across the inlet a spider easily bigger than my hand suddenly appeared from the crease in the bow and raced towards me at the speed of a gold medallist. This time sheer panic gripped me, and I narrowly avoided a topple into the murky water. The ruckus must have scared the beast because it hastily reversed and then disappeared, out of sight over the side. Records broke as I paddled and splashed across the lagoon, up the bank and rolled out of the kayak. Distressingly, I never saw it again as I packed the boats away.

Luckily, we only ran out of water once - on the trail to Rame Head hut. Although the day was the warmest of our excursion, extra time was spent searching out plumes of spray from passing whales, enjoying the unusual spring flowers, and being distracted by impressively large swells crashing against the cliffs alongside us. On other days temperatures ranged from a chilly 5 degrees one morning to late teens and early twenties during the day. We always chose to avoid the risk of dehydration by taking an extra litre of water, but that day was significantly longer than we expected.

We had no issues drinking water directly from the tanks at each hut. The rivers themselves are mostly deep brown to black – and not the transparent black of the West Coast of New Zealand, but more spectacularly obscure. While the water is fine, I never plucked up the courage to do more than take the odd sip.

Just when you think you have seen it all, we arrived at Elephant Rock Bay, named by the shape of the massive granite boulders that shelter the beach from the swells. My sister’s husband and her two daughters met us here and we spent an afternoon enjoying the clear waters.

Track maintenance and organisation are impressive. All huts were clean and well-kept, although the layout of the cabins was another surprise to me. Lined on three sides, leaving the fourth open to the environment which allows the occupants exposure to a cooling breeze, and free to stare at the stars as we dropped off to sleep. A significant advantage of living on the edge of a large continent where the direction of poor weather must be predictable. We quickly learnt to hang our packs from the steel rods that stretched across at ceiling height or make use of the large plastic bins to store our food after nearly feeding a local native rodent one night. That was the only time the wildlife bothered us at the huts.

Considering the trail runs for over a thousand kilometres from Perth to Albany, our 127 km six-day journey was a mere morsel of what was on offer to the more committed adventurer. My sister Janet, now officially an Australian with the benefit of local knowledge, wisely chose to begin the route in late September. Not only was this a quiet time on the trail, and the major winter rainfalls were over, but the cooler temperatures made for very pleasant walking conditions.

I choose to use Jetboil, Backcountry Cuisine, Macpac and Merrell products.

Janet getting close to Rame Head hut after a long day

"The coastline itself ranges from high weathered cliffs to small bays protected by massive granite boulders, and then curved beaches of fine white sand."

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Adrian Mattern, Dane Jackson, Bren Orton, Kalob Grady on Ivindo River, Gabon

IVINDO RIVER:

A KAYAKING ODYSSEY GABON, AFRICA

Words and images by Dave Sodomka/Red Bull Content Pool

Deep in Gabon's uncharted rainforest lies the Ivindo River—a place where wild beauty unbothered by the modern world. For years, its untamed rapids, thundering waterfalls, and labyrinthine channels have remained untouched by paddles. But four world-class kayakers—Adrian Mattern, Dane Jackson, Kalob Grady, and Bren Orton—just rewrote history. Their pioneering descent of this enigmatic river wasn't just an expedition; it was a full-throttle exploration of one of Earth's last untouched waterways.

This wasn't a casual float downriver. The team tackled 145 kilometers of pure wilderness over 12 days, navigating rapids so wild they'd defied exploration for decades. Kongou Falls, the river's roaring crown jewel, stretched out as a 3-kilometer gauntlet of slides, torrents, and surging power. At Mingouli, the team met towering waterfalls with relentless force. Kouata Mango's 20-meter drop came with its own monstrous rapid, Eldorado, and at the journey's crescendo—Tsengue Leledi—Ivindo's most dangerous waters demanded every ounce of training, skill, and sheer nerve.

Preparation was as intense as the river itself. Adrian Mattern, inspired by Olaf "Big O" Obsommer's 2007 reconnaissance of Ivindo, spent years poring over maps and hydrology reports. But no map could prepare them for Gabon's raw unpredictability.

Upon arrival in Makokou, the crew dove into survival training, sharpening their readiness to face the rainforest's heavyweight residents—elephants, crocodiles, hippos, and snakes. The stakes weren't just high; they were life or death.

Each kayaker carried 49 kilograms of gear, a mix of high-tech essentials and survival basics. Solar-powered drones, HD cameras, and power banks documented the expedition's untamed beauty. The team captured every moment, from Kongou's thunderous cascades to remote, hidden rapids that no human had seen, let alone survived.

The Ivindo River isn't just a kayaking dream; it's a natural marvel. Stretching hundreds of kilometers through Gabon's dense rainforest, it's home to a staggering array of wildlife and ecosystems. For Mattern, it was an obsession born in his teenage years, when he first learned about Ivindo's potential as one of Africa's last great whitewater mysteries.

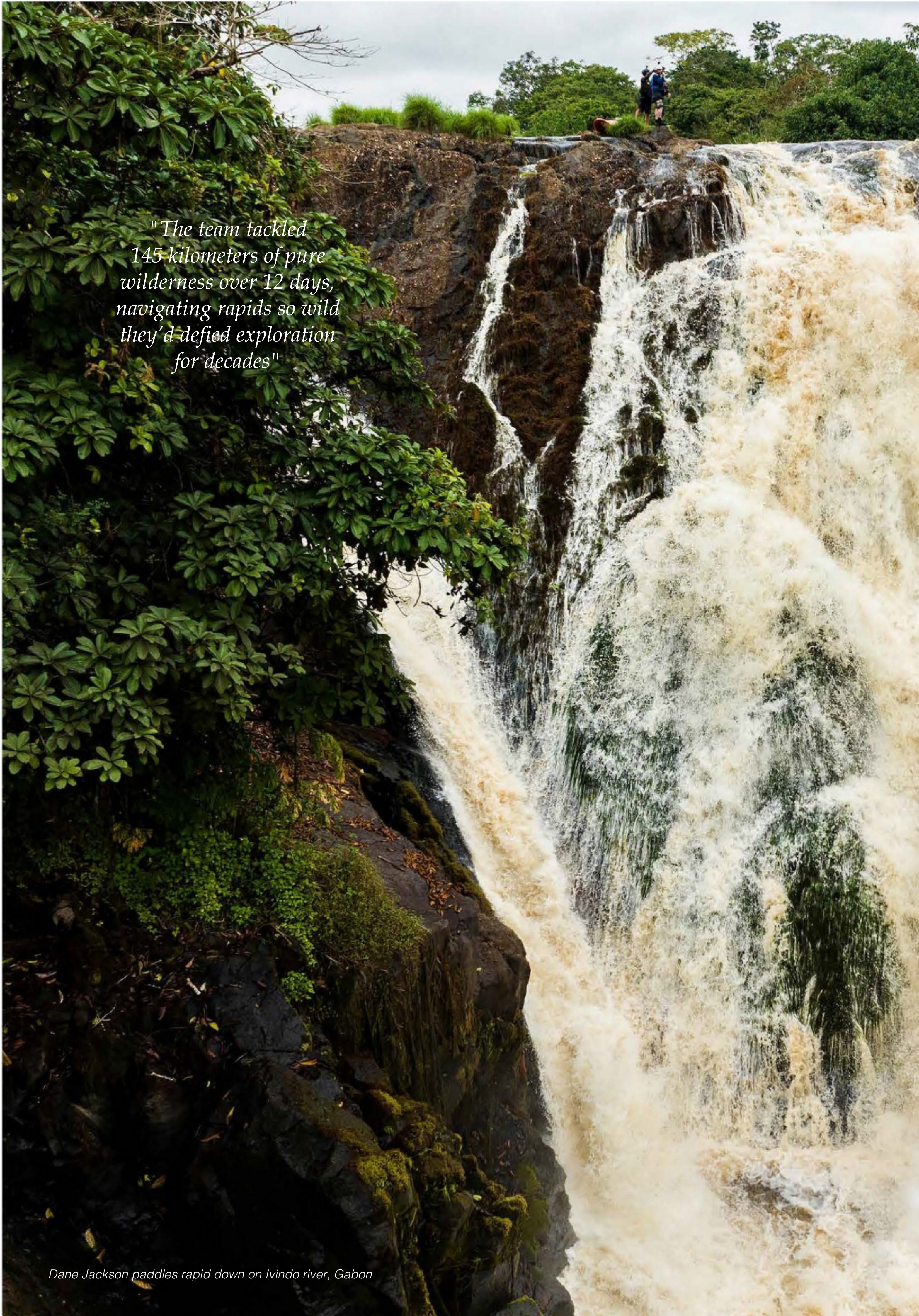
But obsession only takes you so far. The descent demanded relentless teamwork, technical mastery, and split-second decisions. There were no second chances on this river, where one wrong move could send a kayak hurtling into chaos. Yet, against all odds, the team's bond and preparation saw them through.

This wasn't just an adventure; it was a testament to the human spirit's hunger for exploration. Along the way, the kayakers didn't just navigate rapids—they honored the Ivindo River's untouched beauty. Their journey, immortalized in Gabon Uncharted: Sending Ivindo Falls (streaming now on Red Bull TV), offers a rare glimpse into a world few will ever witness.

The first-ever descent of Gabon's Ivindo River wasn't just a milestone in whitewater kayaking—it was a masterstroke of exploration. For those who dream of pushing limits, the Ivindo stands as a call to action. It's still wild out there.

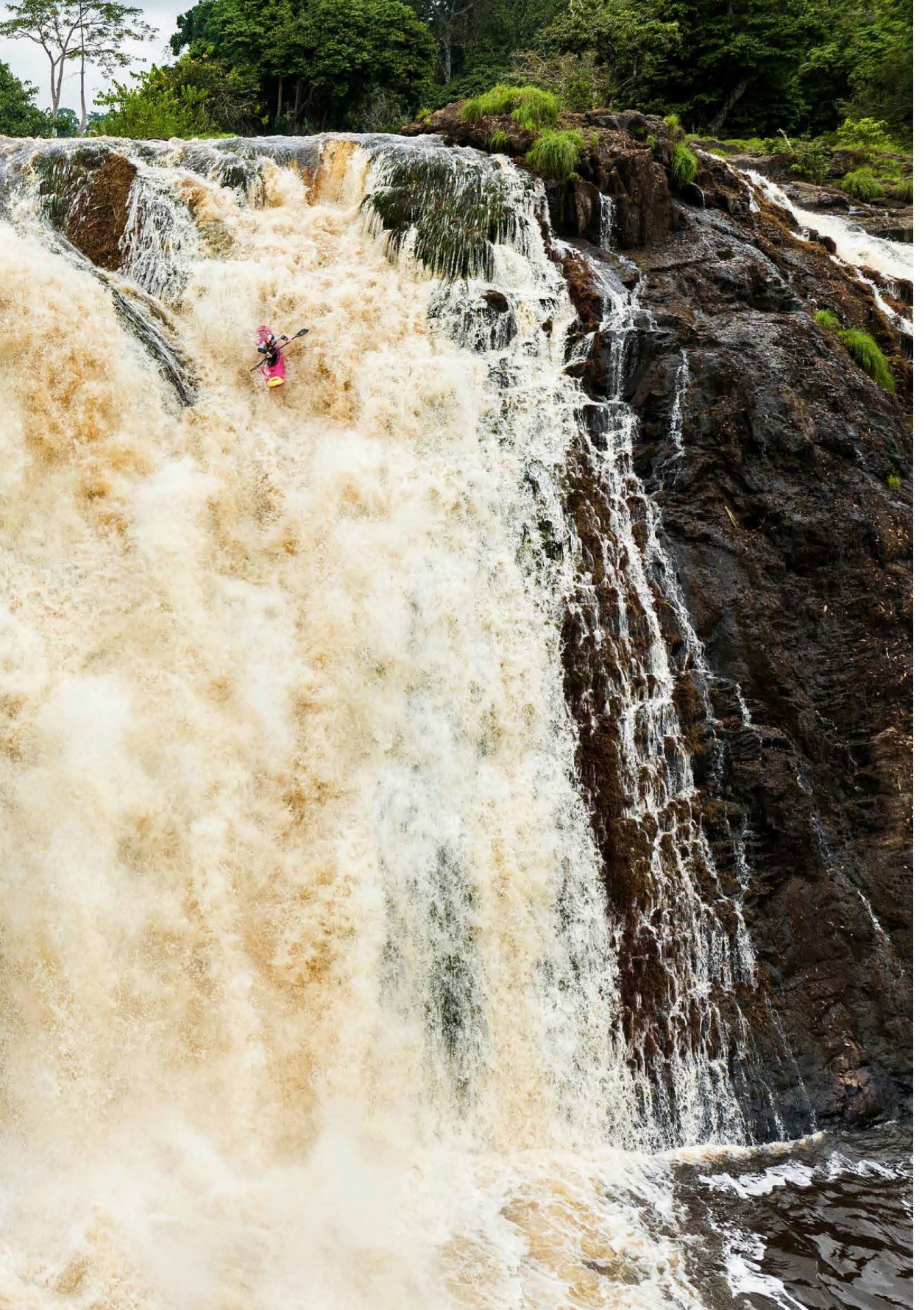
Adrian Mattern paddles down one of the channels on Ivindo river, Gabon.

RedBull



"The team tackled 145 kilometers of pure wilderness over 12 days, navigating rapids so wild they'd defied exploration for decades"

Dane Jackson paddles rapid down on Ivindo river, Gabon



CLIMBING IN NZ:
YOUTH CLIMBING TO NEW HEIGHTS

Words and images by Sarah Hay

Climbing has exploded in popularity across New Zealand and the globe, attracting enthusiasts eager to push their limits on vertical walls, crags, and boulders. To uncover the next generation of climbing talent, we turned to one of the country's most respected figures, Sarah Hay. As a top climber and a cornerstone of Northern Rocks—a premier bouldering gym on Auckland's North Shore—Sarah is perfectly placed to spotlight the names shaping New Zealand's climbing future.

Here are her picks for the climbers making waves and setting the bar higher in the local climbing scene: Finlay Cate, Rebecca Hounsell, Luka Sugimoto-Faulkner, Lucy Sinclair, Oskar Wolff and Henry Booker.
This issue we shine the light on Finlay, Rebecca and Luka.

Stay tuned for more on Lucy, Oskar and Henry in the coming issues as they continue to redefine the boundaries of climbing.

FINLAY CATE: BALANCING CREATIVITY, CHALLENGE, AND COMMUNITY IN CLIMBING

Notable achievements:
2024:
1st CNZ Open Boulder National Champs
2nd CNZ Youth Boulder National Champs
2nd CNZ Open Lead National Champs
2nd CNZ Youth Lead National Champs
1st NZ Secondary Schools National Champs
1st AUS Youth Lead Champs
1st Boulder Bash, Northern Rocks
2nd NIBS U18 category
3rd NIBS Open category
SCA AUS Open boulder
2022 CNZ Open/Youth Boulder National Champs
2023 CNZ Open/Youth Boulder National Champs
2023 AUS Youth Lead/Boulder Champs, Sydney.
2023 IFSC Youth World Lead/Boulder Championships, Seoul.
2023 IFSC Oceania Olympic Qualifier, Melbourne.
2024 IFSC Oceania Open Boulder Championship, Perth.

For this 17-year-old climber, the journey began at an intermediate school camp, sparking a love for the personal challenges climbing offers. He values both indoor and outdoor climbing, appreciating the creativity and physicality of gym walls as much as the beauty and subtlety of outdoor routes.

Climbing four times a week at Northern Rocks, Finlay's focus is on tackling projects and refining his technique. Competitions bring a unique thrill, offering a supportive and exciting environment to push boundaries alongside friends. While waiting in isolation can be challenging, the camaraderie and sense of achievement make it worthwhile.

Inspired by climbers Tommy Caldwell and Toby Roberts, Finlay navigates the pressures of competitions with a laid-back mindset, embracing the experience without overthinking. Climbing is as much about the connections and moments of triumph as it is about the climb itself.

Finlay has been a climbing coach at Northern Rocks for the past year, inspiring the next generation of young climbers.

Do you have a preference between indoor and outdoor climbing? I really have no preference between indoor and outdoor climbing, both mean two very different things to me. First indoors is how I first started climbing, I always enjoy the energy, power and how different some beta can vary from climber to climber. Outdoors is something I took up later in my climbing but I love the adventure, the people and the small microbeta that I have to figure out for myself.

How often do you go climbing, and what types of goals do you set for yourself? When I go outdoor climbing I usually set myself three goals. First, a goal on my grade - this goal is purely based on my grade performance and how hard I want to climb during the trip. The second is more of how I want my climbing to feel - do I want my climbing to feel easy or hard, this all depends on what type of trip I'm going on. The third is my enjoyment - do I want to have fun with my friends on the climbing trip (always a priority) or do I want to put my head down and work hard for a send.

What are the most rewarding aspects to competition climbing? I compete because I love the challenge of having a time restraint to solve a problem and because I'm a very competitive person I'm usually very determined to win (even when I don't). I also enjoy competing just because it's fun, aside from outdoor climbing trips I have some of the most fun around climbing during competition, either during the qualifiers or isolation for finals.

Why do you coach climbing and what do you find the most rewarding? Watching the kids who I coach succeed and enjoy themselves on and off the wall.

What is a highlight you have experienced from coaching others? One of my kids told me randomly while we were working on a climb that he really likes climbing, simple but very important for an up and coming youth climber.

REBECCA (BECCA) HOUNSELL: : A JOURNEY OF PERSONAL GROWTH AND COMMUNITY

For this dedicated climber, the passion for rock climbing began at the age of 4. Beyond the physicality of the sport, climbing serves as a powerful outlet—a way to push boundaries and strive for personal growth. Becca is studying engineering in Christchurch and aims to push her personal boundaries of what is possible outdoors, aiming for grade 30.

While Becca appreciates both forms of climbing, the outdoor experience holds a special place. It offers not only the beauty of nature but also a sense of community and a focus on individual progress. Climbing three times a week, her goals range from achieving specific grades to building strength through intermediate milestones like weighted pull-ups.

Participation in climbing competitions serves as a motivational tool, helping her gauge progress and refine skills, though the true fulfillment comes from the journey rather than the competition itself. Inspired by iconic climbers like Hazel Findlay and Shauna Coxsey, as well as local mentors Sarah Hay and Rachel Musgrave, her story reflects a love for climbing as both a personal and communal pursuit.

Becca has been a climbing coach at Northern Rocks and Uprising gyms, and is currently an Uprising ambassador. She inspired a number of young girls coaching the She Climbs bouldering program at Northern Rocks and continues to coach workshops at Uprising, since her move to Christchurch this year.

Becca's notable comp achievements this year include:

2024 1st CNZ Open & Junior Lead National Champs
2024 2nd NIBS Open overall
IFSC Oceania Olympic Qualifier Finalist
2022 & 2023 1st NIBS Youth Open & Youth A National Champs
2023 1st CNZ Open & Youth A Lead National Champs
2023 1st CNZ Boulder Junior National Champs

Outdoor achievements:

Fuel (29)
No Country For Old Men (29)
Great White (29)
Man of Substances (29)
Bogus Machismo (29)

What do you like about indoor climbing vs outdoor climbing? Indoor climbing allows you to train in an accessible manner. Outdoor climbing I find is generally more fulfilling.

How do you prepare or train for your outdoor projects and goals? I train endurance and strength indoors. I climb indoors with an emphasis on technique that would be specific to outdoor climbing.

When you go outdoors, do you always try your hardest grades or do you climb other grades as well? It's good to do a mixture I think. I endeavor to push my hardest grade but I get a lot of enjoyment from climbing easier things for fun. I think a balance between the 2 is very important. You can definitely learn a lot from easier climbs.

What has been one stand out experience through your climbing journey so far? I think my ascent of Fuel (29) would be my most stand out experience. Initially I was reluctant to attempt it because I thought it was "out of my league." It was very satisfying to be able to piece together such a classic climb in a beautiful location.

How does climbing affect how you approach challenges outside of the sport? Has climbing ever taught you something unexpected about yourself? It's taught me that I need to be pushing myself in order to be happy. It also allows me to manage high pressure situations like exams better, where regulating emotions is important.

What skills have you gained from climbing, both physically and mentally? Climbing makes you a lot stronger both physically and mentally. In a modern world many people lack an outlet like climbing to push themselves. I think it's really good for your wellbeing.

How do you handle fear or hesitation when you're climbing, especially on difficult routes? Over time as you're exposed to scary situations your tolerance increases. In the moment, however, I'll take a deep breath and try to relax my body. I also accept that it's okay to step back in situations where I'm too scared.

Do you have any climbing rituals or routines that help you stay focused or calm? For some reason I always blow the chalk off my hands when I chalk up. No idea why but it feels wrong if I don't.

What are your climbing goals for the future? Any specific routes, grades, or achievements you're aiming for? I would like to climb a grade 30 outdoors.

If you could go climbing anywhere in the world, where would you go and why? There are many places, such as the rocklands or font because of the incredible looking boulders.

LUKA SUGIMOTO-FAULKNER: CLIMBING WITH PASSION: A YOUNG COMPETITOR'S JOURNEY

At just 15 years old, this climber's introduction to the sport came through a casual visit with hisr dad to Birkenhead Indoor Leisure Centre. While it took time to develop an addiction to climbing, the sport eventually became a central part of his life.

Climbing 3-4 times a week, Luka's focus is on consistency, time management, and giving 100% effort in each session, especially leading up to competitions. Comps are currently the main motivator for his training. Interestingly, while other sports like tennis felt overly competitive, climbing competitions offer a supportive atmosphere that fuels his passion.

Mental resilience is Luka's biggest challenge, but through workshops and post-comp reflections, he's turned a former weakness into a growing strength. Inspired by climber Toby Roberts' dedication, he strives to mirror his commitment and effort in their own climbing journey. Luka's story showcases a love for the process, the competition, and the ever-evolving challenge of climbing.

Luka is also a route setter at Northern Rocks and loves coming up with creative experiences for the community.

Notable achievements:
2024 1st NIBS Open overall
2024 1st CNZ Youth National Champs
2024 1st Auckland College Series
2024 1st NZ Secondary Schools National Champs

What are the most rewarding aspects to competition climbing, and why do you compete? On paper, the most rewarding thing about comp climbing is the result. Good result = happy. But besides that, I love the atmosphere, the nerves, the adrenaline, the people, the crowd, climbing hard, it doesn't get much better than that.

How do you manage your time within a comp format ie. 5 mins or 4 mins to complete a boulder? How do you manage the pressure and time constraints vs resting in between attempts? This is something I've also worked on in the lead up to youth nationals. Tactics are important. Making sure to rest is SO key. Staying calm and not rushing attempts(esp on powerful, long boulders) is so important and it is great to sit back, analyse and improve your next turn. Even for less powerful boulders, resting is so important as you need time to sit back and again, analyse and improve on the next go.

What does success mean to you, in competition climbing? I remember doing the mental workshop with Alexi Pritchard, and I told her success depends on the result. However that is something I can't control, so we worked on creating different aspects of success for me. So NOW success to me is about - how hard I tried, how calm I was, what I learnt, and finally the result. This makes success a lot more in my control and I can enjoy competitions more.

What does your training look like? Is it structured, or do you just have fun? Leading up to a comp, for like 2 months there will be very intense, very structured training that I give 100% effort on. Otherwise, training is usually casual- have fun and do what u wanna do.

Are there any specific techniques or moves you're working on improving? There's an endless amount of things to be working on. Climbing is like that. With climbing, not anything specific at the moment. But for setting, I would love to improve on so many points. I would love to explore new ideas and techniques.

What do you enjoy about route setting? It's hard to explain how addicting it is. The idea of putting your ideas on the wall into absolutely anything is insane. It's endless. It's art. Having people enjoy my climbs and learning something makes me really happy. I just want to keep it up and keep improving as a setter.

I have never set outside of commercial setting, but difficulties include setting specific grades, balancing good movement and the aesthetic part of setting, and overall the difficulties of forcing moves and being stumped for ideas. Being a good setter means you can improvise, make do with the space and holds you have and work well in a team. I am keen to keep working on these to become a better setter.

What stand out lessons or highlights from route setting have you experienced? I learnt taking mental breaks is important for being efficient. Being open minded to new ideas, concepts and moves is also something I have learnt, as it helps create great blocs and makes working as a team easier. Being prompt and direct.

What are your climbing goals for the future? Any specific routes, grades, or achievements you're aiming for? I would be hopeful to think I would get into a world cup one day. I would like to climb v15 one day. I would like to travel with friends and go outdoors. I would like to own a gym one day. I would like to become really good at setting and setting nationally, internationally too.

What advice would you give to someone younger or new to climbing? Find what you like. Climbing is fun and there are so many things to do. From outdoors to comps, to indoor casuals, to setting to coaching, find what you like and work on it as much as u can. With enough hard work, you get to where you wanna be.

Steep climb out of Sir Robert Creek, Hokitika River, Central Westland
Photo: Mark Watson / Highluxphoto

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From the majestic fjords of Greenland to the vibrant reefs of Sulawesi, SSV's liveaboard journeys seamlessly blend kayaking, exploration, and cultural immersion. Here, we dive into the magic of these multi-day adventures, sharing a glimpse of the destinations, the people, and the stories that make them extraordinary.

West Greenland: A Polar Adventure *(main image)*
The rugged beauty of West Greenland's Disko Bay awaits intrepid paddlers aboard the Elsi, a nimble 16-person schooner. This 9-day expedition blends kayaking, hiking, and cruising through some of the Arctic's most pristine and awe-inspiring landscapes. Greenland is the original home of kayaking, paddling alongside towering icebergs and venturing into fjords surrounded by steep basalt cliffs is an otherworldly experience.

Highlights include exploring the volcanic landscapes of Disko Island, hiking to breathtaking waterfalls, and paddling through the Uummannaq Fjord, with its heart-shaped mountain backdrop. Encounters with Arctic wildlife like reindeer, musk ox, and humpback whales add to the trip's magic.

Back on the Elsi, travellers enjoy warm meals, cozy cabins, and the endless light of the polar summer.

"The rugged beauty of West Greenland's Disko Bay awaits intrepid paddlers."

Kayaking the clear waters of Palau

Palau: A Marine Wonderland *(above)*
In the heart of Micronesia, Palau's UNESCO World Heritage-listed Rock Islands offer some of the clearest waters and vibrant ecosystems on Earth. The Palau Siren, a luxurious 40-meter liveaboard handcrafted from ironwood and teak, serves as the perfect base for exploring this marine wonderland. Kayakers navigate through intricate waterways, paddle over teeming coral reefs, and venture into hidden caves and blue holes.

"Palau is a paddler's dream," shares Elijah, an SSV guide. "Each day, we glide past mushroom-shaped islands, explore marine lakes, and snorkel in lagoons alive with 1,500 species of fish and 700 types of coral."

The journey also includes diving opportunities to witness WWII wrecks and breathtaking underwater canyons. After a day of adventure, guests return to the Palau Siren's spacious decks, enjoying fresh meals and the camaraderie of fellow explorers.

Abrolhos Islands

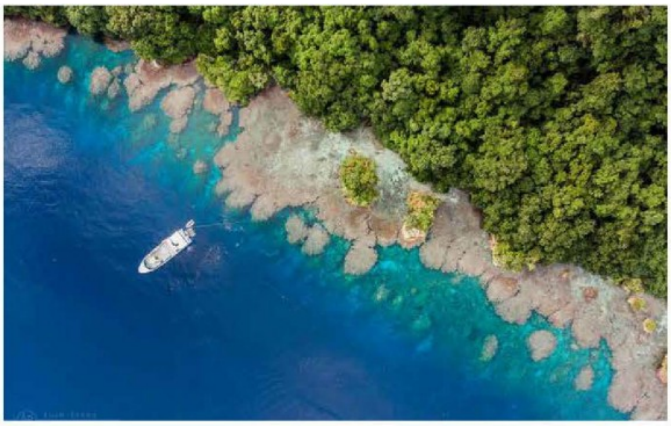
Sulawesi: A Tropical Masterpiece *(right)*
Sulawesi, Indonesia, offers a liveaboard adventure unlike any other. Aboard the elegant Indonesian wooden style ship, the Jakaré, paddlers explore this archipelago's dramatic landscapes, from karst cliffs to mangrove-fringed lagoons. Sulawesi's waters are alive with marine biodiversity, making it a snorkeler's and diver's paradise.

Paddling routes include visits to remote fishing villages, snorkelling over coral reefs, and trekking to hidden waterfalls. Back aboard the Jakaré, guests can unwind with meals featuring fresh, local ingredients while sharing stories of the day's adventures.

Abrolhos Islands: Australia's Hidden Gem *(left)*
Off the coast of Western Australia lies the Abrolhos Islands, often referred to as the 'Galapagos of the Indian Ocean.' This archipelago of 122 islands is renowned for its rich marine biodiversity and historical shipwrecks, including the infamous Batavia. The Silverado, a 24-meter deluxe catamaran, serves as the floating base for this adventure.

Each day brings a mix of kayaking, snorkelling, and historical exploration. Paddlers glide through turquoise waters, past limestone reefs teeming with fish, rays, and the endangered Australian sea lion. Visits to sites like Beacon Island reveal remnants of the Batavia's dramatic history, while snorkelling over coral gardens offers a mesmerizing underwater spectacle.

Exploring from a liveaboard in Sulawesi, Indonesia



The Solomon Islands offer a wide range of experiences

SSV owner, Toby Story

Solomon Islands: A Blend of Adventure and Culture *(left)*
The Solomon Islands' vibrant reefs and stories past make for an unforgettable 11-day liveaboard journey aboard the steel cruiser, the Solomons Master. Paddlers explore a labyrinth of coral atolls, WWII wrecks, and pristine lagoons. Villages like those in Marovo Lagoon offer unique cultural encounters, with local carvers and markets providing a glimpse into island life.

"There's something magical about paddling alongside locals in dugout canoes," says SSV owner Toby Story. "It's a connection to the past and present all at once."

Highlights include kayaking through the Russell Islands' lush landscapes, diving on vibrant reefs teeming with marine life *(left)*, and snorkelling at sites like Mary Island, where coral gardens and schooling fish create an underwater paradise.

The Liveaboard Difference
What sets SSV's liveaboard adventures apart is the blend of comfort and exploration. The liveaboard vessels serve as both transport and home base, allowing adventurers to access remote locations while enjoying amenities like air-conditioned cabins, freshly prepared meals, and knowledgeable guides. This flexibility also allows for deeper exploration. If weather shifts or tides change, the crew can adapt, ensuring every day brings new discoveries.

"These trips are about maximizing adventure in the wildest parts of the world while ensuring the comfort of your own space at the end of the day," explains Toby, SSV owner.

Trip Grading
Sea kayaking provides endless opportunity to experience the ocean under your own steam. From close encounters with wildlife, paddling slowly on mirror calm waters, drifting past towering cliffs of rock or ice to adventurous crossings in the open seas, we offer a trip to suit your ability and appetite for adventure.

With SSV sea kayaking is an activity that any reasonably active person can participate in. While previous kayaking experience is not a requirement to sign up for the trips, the more prepared you are the more likely you will be to enjoy your trip.

It is important to remember that the degree of difficulty of the trip will in large part be determined by the weather you encounter. Single and double sit-in expedition sea kayaks are used with spray skirts and rudders. The kayaks are stable, easy to paddle and control and are very forgiving. They are suited for beginners, experts or intermediate paddlers alike.

SSV - A Legacy of Adventure
SSV's commitment to crafting transformative experiences is evident in every aspect of their liveaboard adventures. Whether you're paddling alongside towering cliffs, interacting with locals, or simply floating in silence as the sun dips below the horizon, these trips are about more than the destinations. They're about connection—to nature, to others, and to yourself.

Toby Story *(bottom right)*, SSV's owner, reflects on the philosophy behind the company's expeditions: "Our goal has always been to create journeys that inspire people to reconnect with the natural world and find joy in its wonders."

So, what's it like to embark on an SSV liveaboard kayaking expedition? It's waking up to the sound of waves lapping against the hull. It's the thrill of spotting a sea turtle or manta ray just meters away. It's the laughter around a campfire and the stories shared under starlit skies. Most of all, it's the feeling of being fully alive, carried forward by the tides of adventure.

Where will your paddle take you next?

SSV

Paddle the world in comfort

There's a unique rhythm to life on the water, where the rising sun pulls you from your cabin, the morning mist kisses the ocean, and the promise of adventure lies just beyond the horizon. SSV, a pioneer in liveaboard kayaking expeditions, has transformed this rhythm into an unforgettable experience for adventurers seeking to explore the world's most stunning marine environments.

www.southernseaventures.com ✉ ssvtrips@southernseaventures.com

LET'S GO TRAIL RUNNING:

NEW YEAR, TIME FOR TRYING NEW STUFF

By Nick Laurie

For years I thought those grubby unkempt glorified trampers that did trail running were mad. I had after all completed 25 marathons and knew all that there was to know about training and running events. I can remember seeing friends posting about particular off road, or as I thought "dirty" runs and looking at the slow times and wondering why did they bother?

One thing about road running that I didn't put together was that it is a constant, very similar foot strike and this as I aged opened me up for injury. The lack of variation was nailing my knees, calves, hamstrings and Achilles tendons. I had come to accept that part of lacing on the running shoes was to manage injuries. I would push my limits, get injured, or sore, throttle back and then repeat. I blamed my shoes and tried many types. I blamed the distance and started to restrict how far I went. I blamed my age and just thought that it was time for me to grow out of this dumb sport.

I started to cross over to the dark side during the crazy COVID times when it was frowned upon to be out in the open breathing on cars. I remember running past a couple during these insane times and them yelling at me for not crossing the road. Common sense had gone on holiday alright. There is a cool little bush reserve near our house, and I decided to run under cover on the tracks and trails that it had to offer. This would kerb the yelling. I also noticed that my injuries were fewer and further between. To start with it was a regular time trial where I had a particular circuit that I would try and complete in record time. I mentioned to a colleague that I enjoyed trails and he suggested that we meet up and explore some of the trails that existed in the surrounding suburbs. This started, as a way, to dodge the restrictions of the lockdown and have some outer bubble conversations and companionship. This introduced me to the purist side or trail running with goals of just being out for a time period rather than kilometres covered, and to find new places in our own neighbourhood.

I was hooked and looked to enter some events. Trail running has become one of the world's fastest growing sports, so obviously I was entering a path well-trod. In the last 3 years participation world-wide has grown 25%! This can be seen by a huge increase in all of the trail running apparel and shoes available in sport stores. In Auckland in particular the trail running series, run throughout the winter months, now sells out, and events such as the Kepler Challenge sell out each year in a matter of minutes.

As well as the events I was on the hunt for new and exciting trails to run. I hooked up with a couple of guys who had been doing this for years and were well known on the trail running scene. Wattie introduced me to his favourite Wenderholm Reserve loop and Shakespeare Regional Park. Simon Walters, a lecturer at AUT lived in Puhoi and had access to some epic trails around there. I'm a Chiropractor and whenever I had a runner patient come in I quiz them on their favourite spots and have picked up some great runs. Geoff Clarke gifted me the track from Huia to Whatipu. While running this I did question his friendship but afterwards celebrated a great accomplishment.

My journey started with these secret COVID runs and progressed from event-to-event culminating in the Taupo 100k Ultramarathon. I have watched hours of You Tube videos and then been out and track tested loads of training methods, fuelling strategies, and gear needed to enjoy this sport. There are many trail running support groups available on social media and probably one of the most useful is a group called Wild Things. This group has many members who are keen to share their knowledge, it has a trail directory with great routes throughout NZ, complete with FKTs (Fastest Known Times), and an online shop where you can buy the latest gear. All you need to do is post a question in their Facebook group and you will be bombarded with advice - such is the passion held by this community.

These are my most basic learnings under 3 headings: 1. Gear, 2.Fuelling and 3 Training/Race Calendar. Hopefully you will read these and join the 25% taking up this addictive pastime in 2025.

1. GEAR: If you ask online for advice in this area you will be bombarded with suggestions. Trail runners love their gear.

Shoes. I must declare here that I have been gifted some equipment to try and with it came a pair of trail shoes. My Merrell Agility Peak 5s have served me well.

A comfortable upper that drains well because you will encounter water if you run trails. This needs to be embraced. There are some Gortex shoes on the market that repel water, but these soon turn into little swimming pools strapped to your feet. Jump in the water confident that your shoes will drain.

They have a firm, grippy sole that is great for rocky or Rooty surfaces. The grips are designed to repel clumps of mud, but some reviewers have not found this the case. I've run through some shitty, boggy, tracks and they served me well.
The soles do need to absorb some shock. Some can be too thick and cause you to lose contact with the terrain and trip on a root or a rock. When I did my 100k I was grateful for a bit of shock absorption. I enjoyed the firmness of the sole when running on the rocks of the Routeburn Track and The Goat.

The top trail brands to look out for are Hoka- the speedgoat comes widely recommended. Salomon- probably the most popular in Europe, Asics-seem to evolve and get better each season. Terrex- which are made by adidas. On- cloud which are new brand increasing in popularity.

Socks are also very important. I use Thorlo trail socks which are very good up to 5 hours. I normally put a fresh pair on at the 5 hour mark. One popular brand are the Creeper toe socks that get some good reviews.

If you want a show to help with pronation, supination or to reduce Achilles strain then you need to go to a specialist store that will fit a shoe specifically for your needs. In Auckland we have Shoe Science, The Athletes Foot and one store highly recommended in Christchurch is The Frontrunner. Most of these stores have staff who fill in their spare time in the stores while living on the trails.

The next gadget that is popular with trail runners is a ***hydration vest***. You need about 12L storage for compulsory safety gear, fuel and water. There are many on the market and I was lucky enough to be gifted a Camelbak Apex pro. This has 2 750ml soft flasks that seem to be perfect for racing as they are easily refilled at aid stations. The vest fit snuggly and didn't bounce around. It even has a removable quiver to carry collapsible poles. There are many of these on the market and again goes down to personal fit. Consider that male and female ones need to fit differently. I have used the vest and the bladder. I prefer the vest for comfort. The bladder rode down and after about 4 hours felt uncomfortable. A good trick when using a bladder or a soft flask is to tip them upside down and suck any extra air out of them to stop sloshing. I share this on the trails whenever I hear a slosher.

I have very recently started running with ***poles.*** So far, I can report that they are a game changer saving heaps of energy and making ascents and descents a heap easier. The things that are still in the developmental stages are storage, getting them in and out and how to eat while using them. I'm yet to race with them and am bound to pick up a bit of race etiquette and how they perform under pressure.

Headlamps are another item that I had to venture into for night running and early starts. My research showed that for running you need a minimum of 250 lumens. The battery ones were better than the rechargeable because you get a longer life and can easily carry spare batteries. You get a bit stuck when a rechargeable runs out mid race. Personal comfort comes in here and you need to do a few night runs to get used to them. I felt like a bit of a dill running into the bush on a Saturday night before my big race to see how it looked. I didn't find a possum but was fully prepared to come across some form of wildlife that would be there in the daylight.

CAMELBAK
PEAKS
MERRELL
CHEW
ENERGY

"If you ask online for advice in this area you will be bombarded with suggestions. Trail runners love their gear."

> *"The main trick in trail running is that you want to be out there for a long time and a good time... I still must admit that in a race this tends to be thrown out the window and only recalled in the end of the race post-mortem when I work out how I could have done better."*

2.FUELLING: Running with GU
A big part of trail running and dabbling with ultra marathons requires coming to grips with the fueling required to keep you going.

I did a little experiment to test my body's requirements:
Runs up to one hour - nothing required.
1 to 1.5 - water
1.5 to 2 hours, a gel at 1 hour, water every 30 mins
2-3 hours a gel every 45 mins, water every 20 mins.
3 hours plus gels and water, up to 3 hours and then some real food. Electrolytes become more important in these longer races.

The big thing with nutrition is that you need to experiment during training. Never try anything new on race day. It's always tempting to try out the new gel that you picked up from a race expo and then find out at the business end of the race that it does not agree with you. There are a few things that can happen: it can upset your stomach, in my case if it contains too much sugar a reaction occurs where I crave more sugar and my joints ache, or in the case of caffeine it can bring on a high followed by a low.

So I received my experimental pack from the great team at GU. Here's the stuff that I used.

GU energy gel 30ml - this is the traditional gel that people associate with GU. It's a thick ish Gel that is slower to digest. I liked it for my shorter races. I just needed to chase it down with plenty of water. I take one when coming up to a drinks station. Heaps of different flavors and there are ones with added caffeine if you can handle the boost.

Liquid energy 60ml - these are a bit bulkier than the smaller gel but are way more palatable and are easier to swallow. These are now my preferred Gel and I found the orange flavor the nicest. They also contain electrolytes to help with cellular water balance and prevent cramping. They have carbs to provide energy and BCAAs (Branch Chain Amino Acids) to provide building blocks for muscle repair.

The ***hydration drink tabs*** enabled me to put one of these effervescent tablets (slightly fizzy) into one of my water bottles on my vest to keep up electrolytes when going long. I have water in one bottle and after an hour or so have a sip of electrolyte from the other bottle. Sort of a cocktail hour on the run!

Gu sent me some of their ***Stroopwafels*** which come in a few flavors. These are great for after a few hours when you are craving some real food. They must be digested when you heart rate is low so are ideal for an ultra-aid station. I also have a couple with banana and honey for pre-race breakfast.

FINI
196
I DNF'ED THE RIVERHEAD BACKYARD RELAPS ULTRA
#KEEPONLAPSIN
196

3.TRAINING/ RACE CALENDAR: The major difference that I had to overcome with trail running training, was to slow down. I used to train on the roads and go as hard as I could, get injured then repeat.

The main trick in trail running is that you want to be out there for a long time and a good time. This is achieved by holding back a bit, walking steep hills and embracing flowing downhills at a comfortable pace so that you have enough left in the tank for the whole day or race. I still must admit that in a race this tends to be thrown out the window and only recalled in the end of the race post-mortem when I work out how I could have done better.

Most of my training is done in Zone 2 heartrate. For me this is under 140 beats per minute. You should work out your own individual measures. I can easily hold a conversation at this pace and means that I do have to walk steep sections. The science behind this is that it builds up an aerobic base that you can perform at for hours on end. I do 75% of my running at this pace.

The other sessions are a 40min - 1 hour race pace session with a higher effort level I run almost as hard as I can for this time period, getting me use to breathing hard but staying under control. I also do a hill repeat session where I stride out up a hill 10 times. I also do either a 1k flat out with a 1k walk repeat or a 5k flat out session. I run 4 times a week and mix these workouts into each week.

I then divide my year into quarters based around events that I have entered. I target an event for a good performance and use events leading up to this as an experimental, learning, or building experience. Once I've completed an event I rest up and then rinse and repeat. Rest is one of the hardest things to do but also one of the most vital parts of a training programme. A field won't produce great crops if it is not put into fallow. Rest helps you grow. I have rest days in my weekly plan.

So here you go - this is based on my experiment with one participant so I urge you to grab these and try them out in training first. GU were the original pioneers in the gel scene and continue to innovate. I highly recommend their product.

So there you go a few things to get you into trail running. I'm hooked and hope that you will be. Join the 25%.

good things await
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merrell.co.nz

TRAVEL GUIDE

LOWE ALPINEPACKING CUBES RRP: $34.95 - $54.95
Pack more efficiently by storing your kit in cubes, keep your belongings organized and easy to find. Available in small, medium, and large.
WWW.OUTFITTERS.CO.NZ

PACK&GO POUCH RRP: $59.98
Lightweight, durable hip pack that easily stows into its own pocket. Made of tough, recycled, lightweight nylon, this hip pack is perfect for travelling and hiking. A hands-free way to store your essentials — phone, wallet, keys, and more — you can focus on the task ahead, not where you put your keys. The manoeuvrable straps mean you can wear it on your hip, waist, as a crossbody, or slung over your shoulder. Just pick it up and go. Once you're finished, stow it into its handy pocket for safe keeping.
WWW.KATHMANDU.CO.NZ

KIWI ULTRALIGHT FANTAIL FANNY PACK RRP: $59.50
This ultralight 1.7L pack weighs only 90g and is the perfect size for hiking snacks, a phone, and other essentials you want quick access to while tramping. 10 unique designs to choose from - each design has been created by our team. Fanny pack, bum bag, waist pack - whatever you choose to call it, this is one of the favorite pieces of ultralight kit among those in the know! Weight 90g
WWW.KIWIULTRALIGHT.CO.NZ

SPEED FUSION WEB SPORT WOMEN'S & MENS RRP: $189.99

Relentlessly adaptable. The Speed Fusion Web Sport includes a modern outsole, a fresh aesthetic, and simple straps for the perfect mix of modern, sporty sandals.

Features
- 100% recycled webbing upper
- Hook and loop closure system for quick adjustability
- 60% recycled elastic cord and lock lacing system for quick secure fit
- 100% recycled laces
- 60% recycled elastic heel pull tab webbing
- FloatMax™ Foam integrated insole for a soft and smooth underfoot experience
- Merrell sticky rubber outsole with durable traction that grips when and where you need it
- Vegan Friendly
- 0lbs-14.81oz

WWW.MERRELL.CO.NZ

LIFESTRAW PEAK SERIES SOLO RRP $59.99

Great for travel, hiking, backpacking, camping, emergencies, or anything on-the-go.

LifeStraw Peak Series Solo Water Filter is an ultra-lightweight (48.2g), compact (just 12.9cm), portable water filtration device that removes bacteria, parasites, microplastics, silt, sand, and cloudiness from drinking water.
- Highly versatile: Standard 28mm PCO threads screw on to standard water bottles
- Fills 1L bottle in just 20 seconds 2,000L of clean drinking water
- Made with premium, durable 50% post-consumer recycled BPA-free plastic.
- Includes leak-proof top and bottom caps.
- One-handed flip cap.

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SEA TO SUMMITAEROS ULTRALIGHT PILLOW - TRAVELLER RRP $69.99

Avoid uncomfortable travel and arrive at your destination well-rested with this ultra-lightweight neck pillow. A classic product redesigned with 20D laminated polyester and ergonomic curves. Weighing in at 60 grams and packing into a tiny stuff sack this pillow is a hassle-free, highly effective addition to your daypack.
- Narrows at the centre to fit snugly between your neck and headrest
- Enlarged ends reduce the need to bend your neck for support
- Inflate pillow in a couple of breaths with the multi-functional valve

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DUST&GLOW POWDER UP YOUR TRAVEL ESSENTIALS $65.00

Small, Mighty, & Ready for Any Adventure

Meet your all-in-one travel companion! This essential pack features our complete range of powder-to-foam formulas for hair, face, and body. Perfect for trial, travel, or gifting, these minis are free from harsh chemicals, preservatives, and fragrances, ensuring gentle care wherever you go.

WWW.DUSTANDGLOW.COM

RAB EXPEDITION KITBAG – 50, 70 AND 90 LITRES RRP: $199.95 - $239.95

Hardwearing, heavy duty, and water-resistant, this bag is made with 600D fabric and designed to keep your gear safe and withstand the rigors of an expedition.

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FEATHER FLIGHT CARRY-ON RRP: $379.98

The combination of hardshell case and soft, ripstop nylon body, make the Feather Flight Carry-on super lightweight, easily manoeuvrable, and impact resistant. This bag is small and mighty. In fact, the lightest carry-on suitcases in its class, globally, at 1.6kg.

WWW.KATHMANDU.CO.NZ

KEA AWA | WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM

Drink Safely Anywhere, Anytime. The AWA Straw offers best in class filtration and high flow rate making drink a breeze. Pair with the AWA Bottle to easily drink safely on the go.

WWW.KEAOUTDOORS.COM

YETI PANGA®28L WATERPROOF BACKPACK RRP: $450.00

Built for those who live their lives on the water. Keeps your gear dry, whether in a storm or on a lake.

WWW.NZ.YETI.COM

OSPREY

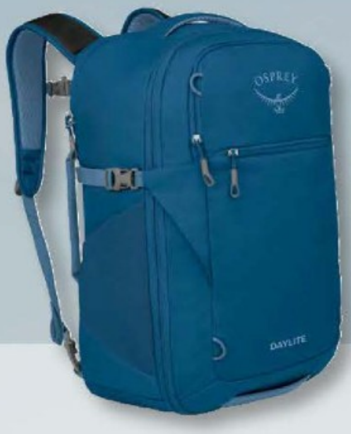
Daylite™ Travel

Practical Design, Easy Organization

From wheeled duffels to carry-on travel packs, the Daylite Travel Collection is made for life on the go. Whether exploring around town, getting away for the weekend or setting off on an extended road trip, these versatile travel and luggage pieces are along for the ride. Accessibly priced, sustainably designed and backed, as always, by our All Mighty Guarantee™.

More info:

CARRY-ON PACKS



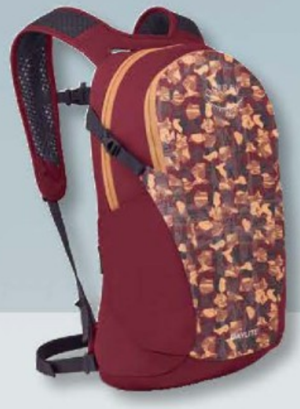
DAYLITE CARRY-ON TRAVEL PACK 35L RRP $199.99

The Daylite Carry-On Travel Pack 35 will have fellow travelers wondering - is that all they brought?

With lockable suitcase-style zip openings, a quick-access compartment that fits most laptops up to 16", highly breathable AirScape™ backpanel and plenty of grab handles, this is the perfect pack for hopping on a quick weekend flight.

- Global carry-on allowed by most airlines
- Trolley handle pass-through to add to wheeled piece
- Two stretch side water bottle pockets
- Front pocket organizer with key storage
- Internal tie down straps
- Internal mesh pocket

A bluesign® PRODUCT.



DAYLITE DAYPACK RRP $119.99

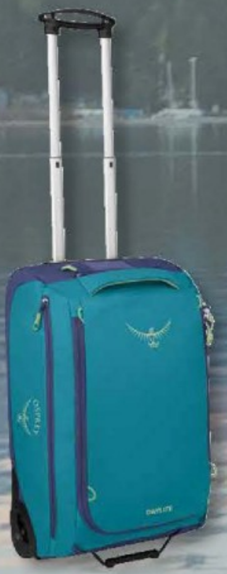
Lightweight, simple, durable and comfortable, the Daylite® is well-loved for a reason.

Reach for it when running everyday errands, going for a quick hike or heading out of town.

- Large panel-loading main compartment
- Attaches to a variety of compatible Osprey packs
- Multifunctional interior sleeve for a hydration reservoir, 13” laptop or tablet
- Dual side compression straps
- Dual water bottle side mesh pockets
- Front pocket with organization and key clip
- Internal reservoir sleeve
- Harness grab handle doubles as a luggage pass-thru

Bluesign® APPROVED

DUFFELS



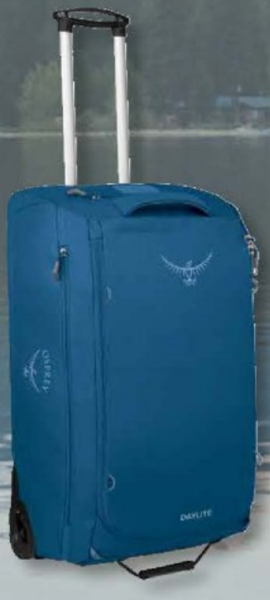
DAYLITE CARRY-ON WHEELED RRP $399.99 40L

The redesigned, two-wheeled Daylite Carry-On Wheeled Duffel 40 is lightweight, durable and ready to see the world.

Featuring a large compartment, two exterior pockets, wheels and deployable backpack straps, this duffel collapses for easy storage when your travels come to an end.

- Fits most airline carry-on requirements
- Two-wheel system with protective rails & fabric kickplate
- Locking push button trolley
- Top & bottom grab handle
- Lockable #10 reverse zips (main opening)
- Secure ID pocket
- Duffel-style opening takes weight off zipper

A bluesign® PRODUCT.



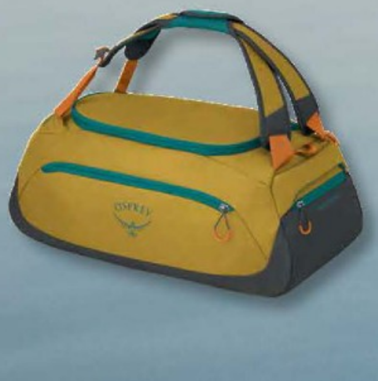
DAYLIGHT WHEELED DUFFEL RRP $449.99 85L $499.99 115L

Lightweight and durable, these Daylite Wheeled Duffels are ready to conquer your next adventure.

A large main compartment makes quick work of packing and two exterior pockets hold quick-access items. Pull out the deployable backpack straps to speed through terminals and stairways. A patented collapsible design makes for easy storage when your travels come to an end.

- Two-wheel system with protective rails & fabric kickplate
- Top & bottom grab handle
- Lockable #10 reverse zips (main opening)
- Secure ID pocket

A bluesign® PRODUCT.



DAYLITE DUFFEL RRP $149.99 45L $169.99 60L

Gym gear, work clothes or a traveling kit, the redesigned Daylite Duffels store it all in a convenient and functional everyday bag.

Featuring backpack, over-the-shoulder and grab-and-go carry options for all-day comfort, an all-new padded bottom protects your gear while easy-access storage pockets adds convenience.

- Large U-zip front panel duffel opening
- Small end zip pocket
- Side horizontal zip pocket

A bluesign® PRODUCT.

EXPANDABLE TRAVEL PACK 26+6L RRP $199.99

The lightweight, durable Daylite Expandable Travel Pack is all about flexible capacity.

Sized to fit as much as possible and maximize airline "personal item" standards with an AirScape™ backpanel, luggage pass-through and tech sleeve. An expandable main compartment adds 6L, transforming it into a standard carry-on.

- Suitcase-style, full zip opening with mesh divider
- Two stretch water bottle pockets
- Front Shove-it Pocket
- Top, side & bottom grab handles
- Internal tie-down strap
- Simple organizer with key storage
- Laptop sleeve against back wall

A bluesign® PRODUCT.

DAYLITE CARRY-ON TRAVEL PACK 44L RRP $249.99

Durable, lightweight and sized to airline standards, the redesigned Daylite Carry-On Travel Pack 44 is ready for takeoff.

- Biggest carry-on allowed by most airlines
- Trolley handle pass-through to add to wheeled piece
- Suitcase-style, full zip opening, with lockable zippers
- AirScape backpanel & backpack straps with sternum strap
- Two stretch, side water bottle pockets
- Front pocket organizer with key storage
- Internal tie-down straps
- Internal mesh pocket

A bluesign® PRODUCT.

70% of Osprey's full product line is made up of bluesign® PRODUCTS. These meet bluesign's strict environmental and worker safety standards throughout all elements of the product. In others, we use bluesign® APPROVED materials. Find out more

PACKING ACCESSORIES

DAYLITE TOILETRY KIT RRP $34.99

The Daylite Toiletry Kit is designed to be an easy-to-use countertop organiser for toiletries and travel essentials with zippered compartments to help keep your travel essentials separated and tidy. Pull out its interior liner for convenient cleanup between trips.

- Large main compartment
- Convenient exterior pocket
- Grab handle

Bluesign® APPROVED

DAYLIGHT HANGING TOILETRY KIT RRP $49.99

The Daylite Hanging Toiletry Kit is a convenient hanging organiser for toiletries and travel essentials with zippered compartments to help keep your travel essentials separated and tidy. Pull out its interior liner for convenient cleanup between trips.

- Web hanging loop for all types of situations
- Large packing space
- Easy-to-see mesh pockets
- Secure zippered pockets

Bluesign® APPROVED

DAYLITE PACKING CUBE RRP $ 14.99 S, $19.99 M, $24.99 L $54.99 SET S/M/L

Whether you're embarking on a weekend trip or a journey across the globe, Daylite Packing Cubes are a smart addition to your travel pack, luggage or duffel. These ventilated packing cubes air out your clothes or gear while keeping you organised.

- J-zip opening for large opening
- See-through, breathable mesh panels
- Webbing grab handle
- Small 2L, Medium 4L, Large 9L
- Available as a set of S, M and L

Bluesign® APPROVED

DAYLITE POWERHOUSE RRP $44.99

Tired of tangled cords? The Daylite Powerhouse is a brand-new accessory for travel or everyday organisation. It capably wrangles tech essentials with elastic molles and internal pockets for your power brick, earbuds and more.

- Secure pocket for earbuds
- Interior zippered pocket
- Exterior zippered pocket (large enough for passport)

Bluesign® APPROVED

These convenient extra storage pockets go on your pack's hipbelt or shoulder strap and are perfect for small essentials and everyday items on-the-go. Use vertically on shoulder strap, or horizontally on hipbelt.

Bluesign® APPROVED

WATERPROOF PACK POCKET RRP $89.99

IPX7 waterproof rated for sensitive electronics, documents and more.

PADDED PACK POCKET RRP $44.99

Compression molded body protects sensitive cargo. Features an internal stretch divider for organization and a key clip.

ZIPPERED PACK POCKET RRP $34.99

Perfect for small essentials and everyday items on-the-go.

@southernapproachnz

Kathmandu: Seeker Women's Lined 4" Shorts

When it comes to activewear, comfort, flexibility, and sustainability are key—and these performance shorts by Kathmandu, hit all the marks. Designed to move with your body, they feature a four-way stretch fabric that lets you run, stretch, or meander in any direction without restriction.

Whether you're powering through a high-energy run or cooling down after a workout, these shorts deliver the breathability and comfort you need, thanks to their moisture-wicking properties that help keep sweat at bay, and they are super comfortable.

What sets these shorts apart, however, is their commitment to the planet. Made using LanzaTech's groundbreaking carbon recycling technology, the polyester fibers are crafted from carbon emissions captured at manufacturing sites. Instead of being released into the atmosphere, these emissions are repurposed into a raw material for the fabric—turning a waste product into a valuable resource.

The combination of high-performance design and eco-conscious materials makes these shorts a win for both your workout and the environment. Whether you're on the trail, at the gym, or just out for a casual stroll, these shorts are as good for your movement as they are for the planet.

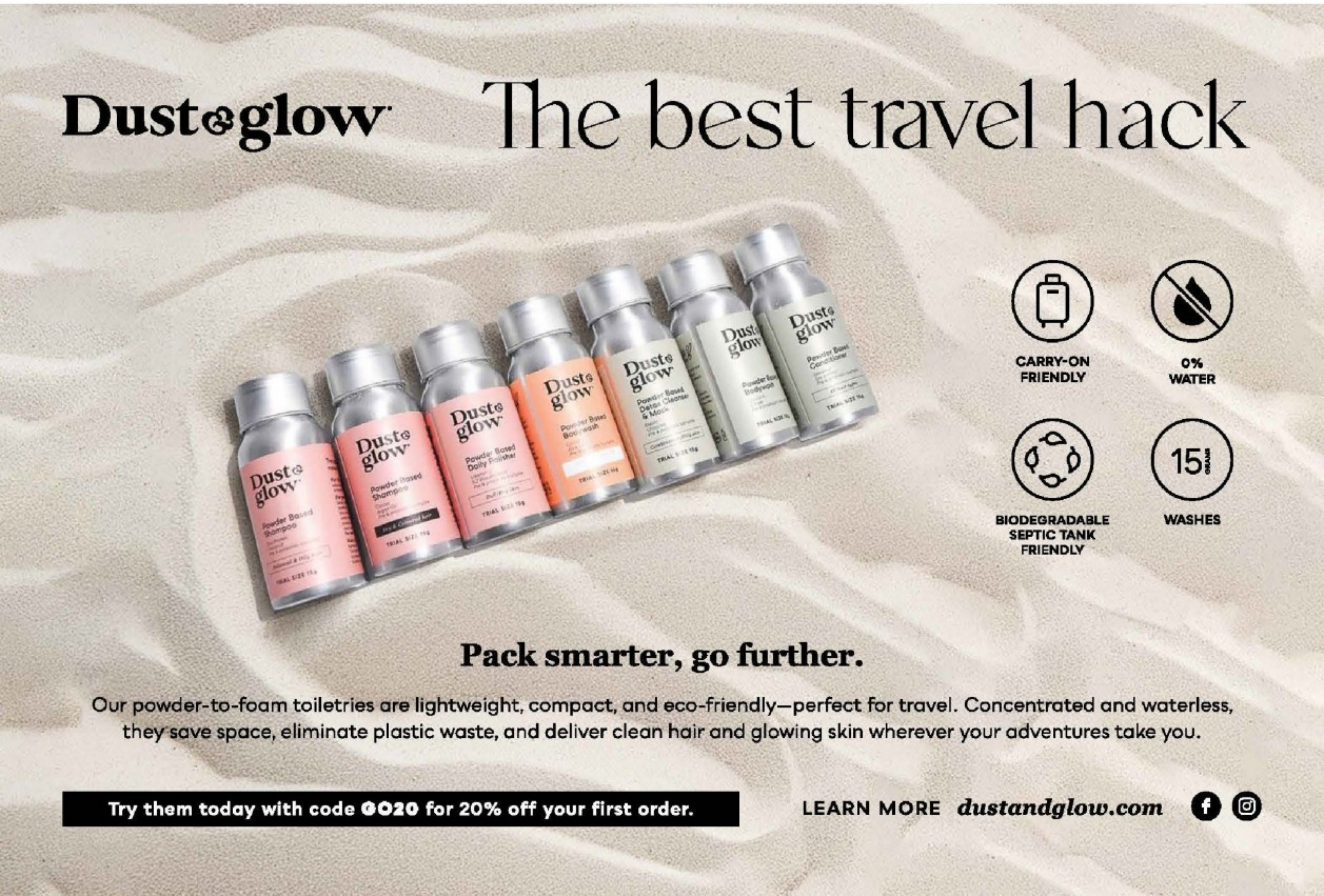
FEATURES:
Freedom of movement
Lightweight, technical four-way stretch fabric for maximum mobility

Anti-odour
Ionic+® Botanical citric acid-based treatment eliminates odour-causing bacteria

Planet in mind
Made from a super soft blend of polyester converted from captured carbon emissions and recycled polyester

- Moisture wicking fabric pulls moisture away from the skin and moves it to the surface to help keep you dry, cool, and comfortable
- Two side drop-in pockets and back envelope pocket with key loop
- High-rise flat waistband provides comfort and support
- Reflective details for visibility
- Integrated mesh lined inner brief
- 4" inseam
- Fit: active, close to body fit, made for high-intensity motion

www.kathmandu.co.nz



Dust&glow

The best travel hack

CARRY-ON FRIENDLY

0% WATER

BIODEGRADABLE SEPTIC TANK FRIENDLY

15 WASHES

Pack smarter, go further.

Our powder-to-foam toiletries are lightweight, compact, and eco-friendly—perfect for travel. Concentrated and waterless, they save space, eliminate plastic waste, and deliver clean hair and glowing skin wherever your adventures take you.

Try them today with code GO20 for 20% off your first order.

LEARN MORE *dustandglow.com*

XTORM FOLDABLE WIRELESS TRAVEL CHARGER 2-IN-1

***RRP: $149.95**

Charge your smartphone and smartwatch simultaneously with 15W + 3W output. Compact, foldable design made from recycled materials—perfect for travel and daily use.

XTORM 20W FUEL SERIES 4 SOLAR POWER BANK - 10000 MAH

***RRP: $109.95**

Power your devices with 20W fast charging and 10,000mAh capacity. Solar-powered, durable, and lightweight—perfect for outdoor adventures or on-the-go charging anywhere.

XTORM 20W FUEL SERIES 5 POWER BANK - 10.000 MAH

***RRP: $79.95**

Fast-charge devices with 20W output and 10,000mAh capacity. Sleek, durable, and compact—perfect for reliable, on-the-go power during travel or everyday use.

SOURCE CONVERTUBE + SAWYER WATER FILTER KIT

***RRP: $159.95**

Transform bottles into hydration systems with the Convertube + Sawyer Filter Kit. Filters 378,500 litres, removing 99.99999% bacteria and 99.9999% protozoa—ideal for outdoor adventures.

BRUNTON ECHO® POCKET MONOCULAR

***RRP: $69.95**

Experience sharp, clear images with 7x magnification and 18mm lens diameter. Compact, lightweight design fits in your pocket—ideal for birdwatching, hiking, or travel.

MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT GROUNDUP RECTANGULAR SLEEPING BAG LINER

***RRP: $149.00**

Add comfort and hygiene to your sleep setup with this lightweight, stretchy drirelease® Lyocell liner. Features anti-microbial Polygiene technology. Includes a compact stuff sack. Weighs 600g.

BRUNTON BRUNTON TAG-ALONG 9045 CHILL ECO COMPASS

***RRP: $29.95**

Stay on course with this compact, eco-friendly compass. Features 5° resolution, thermometer, wind-chill chart, and a recycled bottle lanyard—perfect for outdoor adventures and navigation.

MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT AEROSTAT PILLOW

***RRP: $69.90**

Enjoy a comfortable night's sleep with this lightweight, packable inflatable pillow. Features a 1-way self-sealing valve and silicone print for mat adherence. Weighs 60g.

outdoor action

*prices are subject to change

Find the full product range online at www.outdooraction.co.nz
Follow us on Instagram and Facebook @outdooractionnz

HYDRO NEXT GEN MOC SE MEN'S AND WOMEN'S RRP: $189.99

Meet the Hydro Next Gen. The Hydro style you've come to love plus the performance capabilities from the brand that makes the world's #1 hiking boot brings you the most capable Hydro Moc to date. Equipped with truly hands-free entry, max cushion FloatMax midsoles, and an improved heel shape combine for friction-free all-day comfort and style.

Features

- Bootie waterproof construction to keep feet dry
- Water-friendly EVA foam upper for a lightweight flexible fit and ease of cleaning
- BLOOM® performance foam is made of algae biomass, transforming green water into clean water in the process
- FloatMax™ Foam midsole for a soft and smooth underfoot experience
- Rubber outsole

WWW.MERRELL.CO.NZ

RAB NEXUS PULL-ON RRP: $139.95

The Nexus Pull-on is a staple go-to, lightweight technical mid-layer made with Thermic™ stretch fleece for mobility and comfort with a YKK® chest zip and pocket.

WWW.OUTFITTERS.CO.NZ

OUTDOOR RESEARCH POLARTEC 100 QUARTER ZIP RRP: $139.99

Breathable warmth and moisture-wicking, quick-drying performance for active adventures. 100% recycled polyester Polartec® fleece, UPF 30, featuring a 25cm zip and stretch binding at the collar and cuffs.

WWW.BIVOUAC.CO.NZ

OUTDOOR RESEARCH ASTROMAN AIR SUN HOODYIP RRP: $169.99

Lightweight, durable, stretchy recycled nylon fabric with UPF 50 sun protection that moves with you, wicks moisture, dries quickly and breathes well. Features include a hood, laser-perforated holes at the sides for added breathability and a half zip.

WWW.BIVOUAC.CO.NZ

RAB FIREWALL LIGHT JACKET RRP: $499.95

This soft and supple 3-layer Proflex™ waterproof shell is comfortable and packable, the ideal ally for getting out in mixed conditions.

WWW.OUTFITTERS.CO.NZ

OUTDOOR RESEARCH FREEWHEEL MTB RIDE PANTS RRP: $249.99

Stretchy, breathable, weather and abrasion resistant performance in a bike-specific fit. Quick drying with UPF 50+ sun protection. Features a 3D-printed ankle overlay, for extra abrasion resistance, ankle zips to make it easy to put knee pads on, a higher back waist so you are covered when seated, waist adjustment tabs for a custom fit and zipped pockets.

WWW.BIVOUAC.CO.NZ

STOKEDNZ ADVENTURE TOWELIE (TOWEL PONCHO) RRP: $114.00

Portable change room + towel all in one! Get changed, dry, cozy, anytime, anywhere inside a towelie. Super absorbent, lightweight, quick-drying 100% Turkish Cotton.
Ethically made.

WWW.STOKEDNZ.CO.NZ

CHICKFLY PANTS

Designed to empower women in the outdoors with greater bathroom access using Zipper-less flys comprised of two stretchy overlapping panels that pull apart and snap back in place after being released.

WWW.CHICKFLY.COM

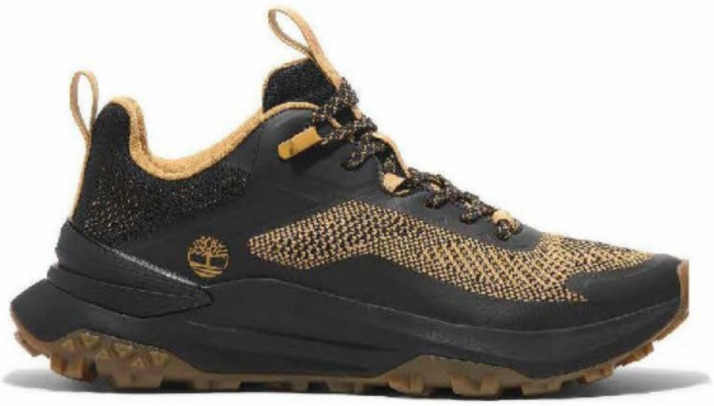
OSPREY

TRANSPORTER™ DUFFELS

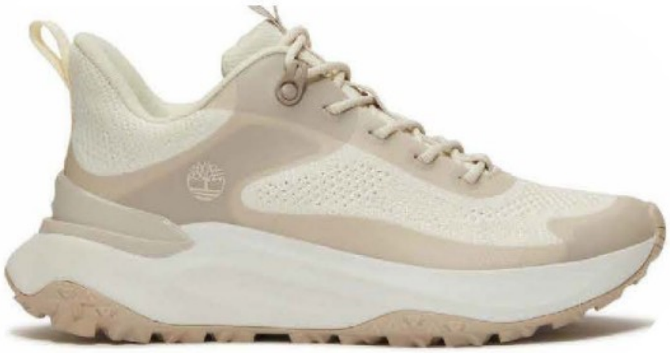
Built Tough for Every Adventure

From weekend getaways to rugged expeditions, Transporter™ Duffels deliver the perfect blend of simplicity and performance. Featuring all-new NanoTough™ fabric—exceptionally durable, highly water-resistant and built to meet bluesign® CRITERIA. Made to handle whatever the journey demands.

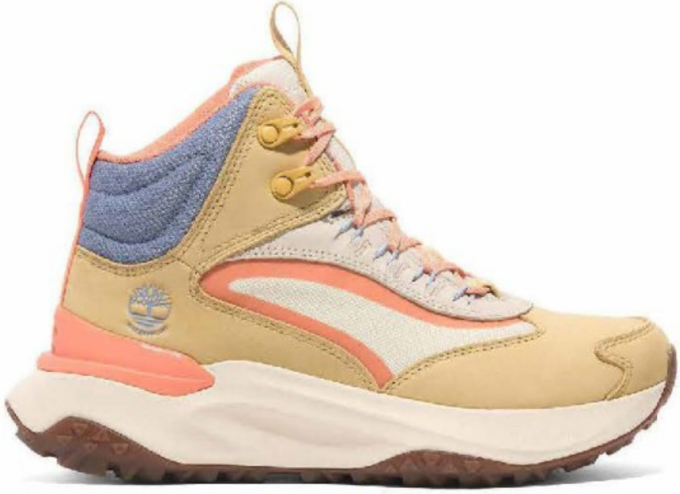
AVAILABLE AT OSPREY.COM OR YOUR LOCAL RETAILER.



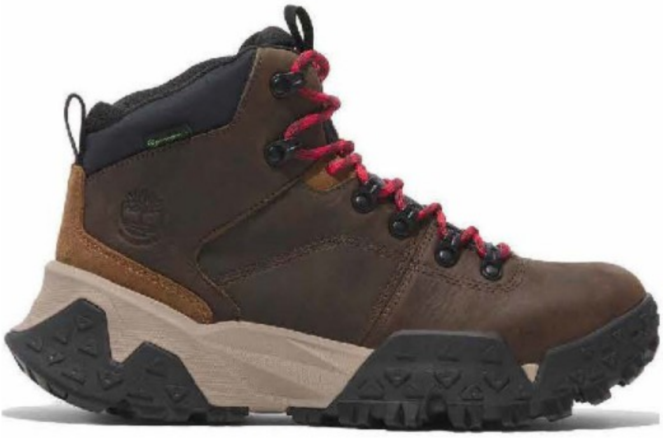
TIMBERLAND MOTION ACCESS LOW (MEN'S)
RRP: $250.00
Lightweight hiking shoe made with TimberCush ™comfort system and lug outsole.
WWW.TIMBERLAND.CO.NZ



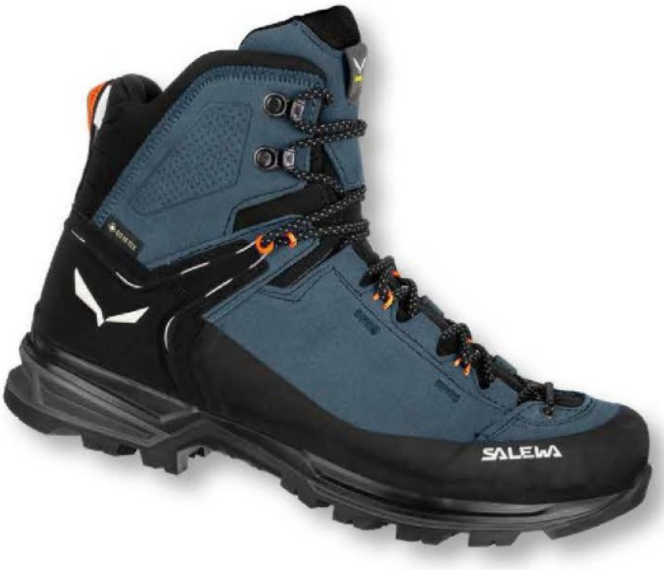
TIMBERLAND MOTION ACCESS LOW (WOMEN'S)
RRP: $250.00
Lightweight hiking shoe made with TimberCush ™comfort system and lug outsole.
WWW.TIMBERLAND.CO.NZ



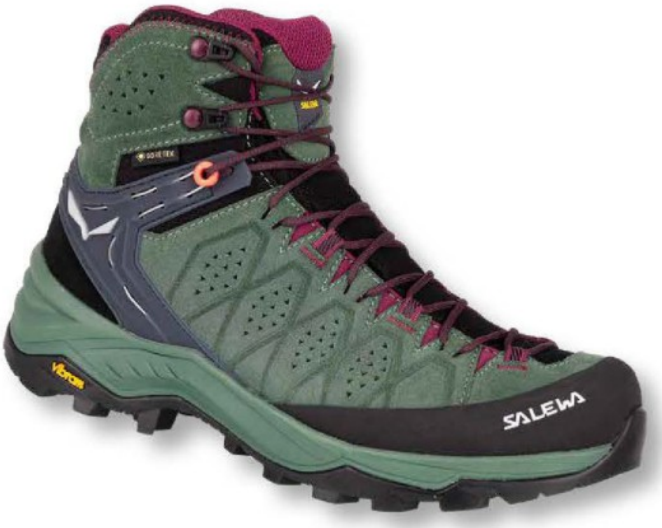
TIMBERLAND MOTION ACCESS WATERPROOF MID (WOMEN'S)
RRP: $320.00
Waterproof hiking boot made with TimberDry ™ waterproof membrane and TimberCush ™comfort system.
WWW.TIMBERLAND.CO.NZ



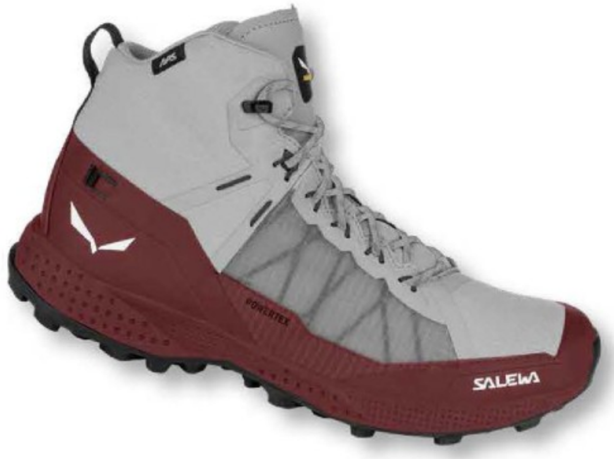
TIMBERLAND MOTION SCRAMBLE WATERPROOF MID (MEN'S) RRP: $320.00
Waterproof hiking boot made with Cordura fabric and TimberDry ™ waterproof membrane.
WWW.TIMBERLAND.CO.NZ



SALEWA MOUNTAIN TRAINER 2 MID GORE-TEX® RRP: $599.90
Introducing the next generation of our bestselling alpine trekking boot. This hard-wearing suede leather classic has a 360° full protective rubber rand and is even lighter and more flexible than the original. Equipped with a waterproof, breathable GORE-TEX® Performance Comfort membrane, a dual density expanded PU midsole, and a self-cleaning Vibram® WTC 2 outsole, which is engineered for improved grip and traction across a wide range of conditions.
Fit: STANDARD / Weight (M) 600 g (pictured) (W) 470 g
WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA

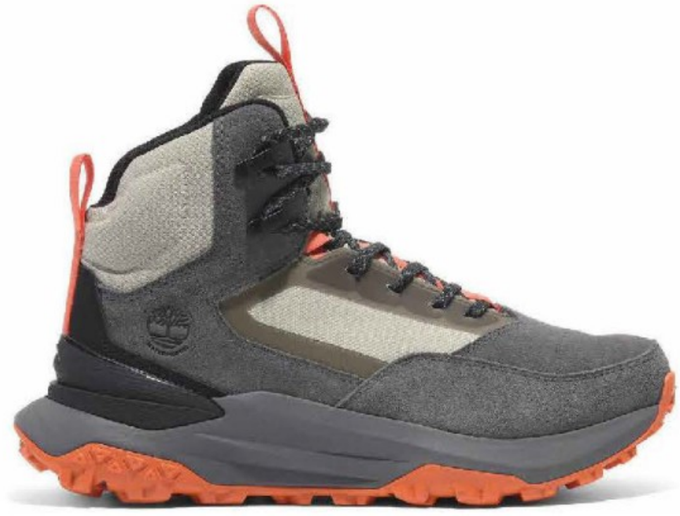


SALEWA ALP TRAINER 2 MID GORE-TEX® RRP: $479.90
The Alp Trainer 2 Mid GTX has a suede leather and stretch fabric upper with a protective rubber rand. Featuring a GORE-TEX® Extended Comfort lining for optimal waterproofing and breathability, and the customizable Multi Fit Footbed (MFF) with interchangeable layers allows you to adapt it to the unique shape of your foot. Climbing Lacing right to the toe allows for a more precise fit, while the Vibram® Hike Approach outsole performs across a wide spectrum of mountain terrain.
Fit: STANDARD / Weight (M) 552 g (W) 482 g (pictured)
WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA



SALEWA PEDROC PRO MID POWERTEX RRP: $459.90

The Pedroc Pro Mid PTX is a lightweight technical shoe, with a mid-cut upper. The SALEWA® 3F system and Ankle Protector system provide additional support and stability, while an abrasion-resistant double ripstop upper and TPU rand provide enhanced protection. Weather protection and breathability are provided by our Powertex® PFC-free waterproof membrane. The EVA midsole delivers optimal rebound, and the Pomoca™ Speed Hiker Pro outsole has a multi-directional lug pattern that works well on mud, grass and rock.
Fit: STANDARD / Weight: (M) 390 g (W) 290 g (pictured)
WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA

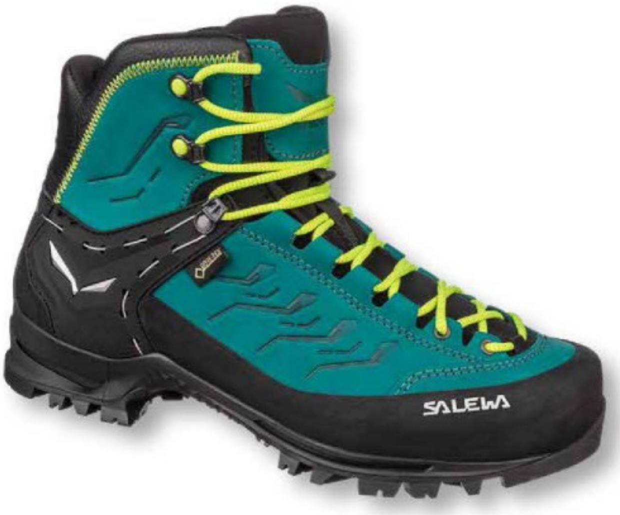


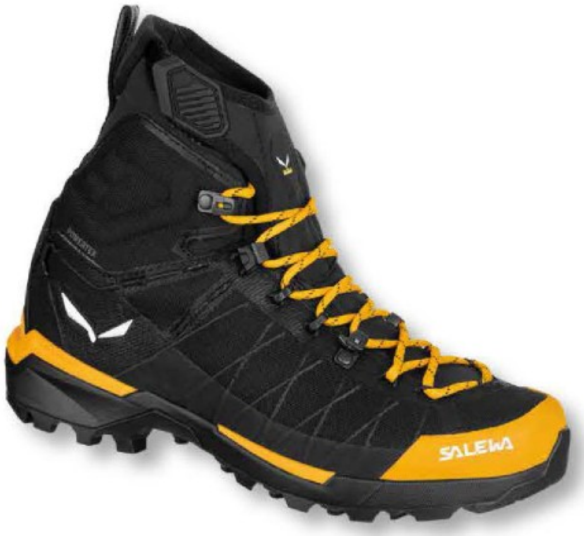
TIMBERLAND MOTION ACCESS WATERPROOF MID RRP: $360.00

Waterproof hiking boot made with TimberDry ™ waterproof membrane and TimberCush ™comfort system.
WWW.TIMBERLAND.CO.NZ

SALEWA RAPACE GORE-TEX® RRP: $649.90

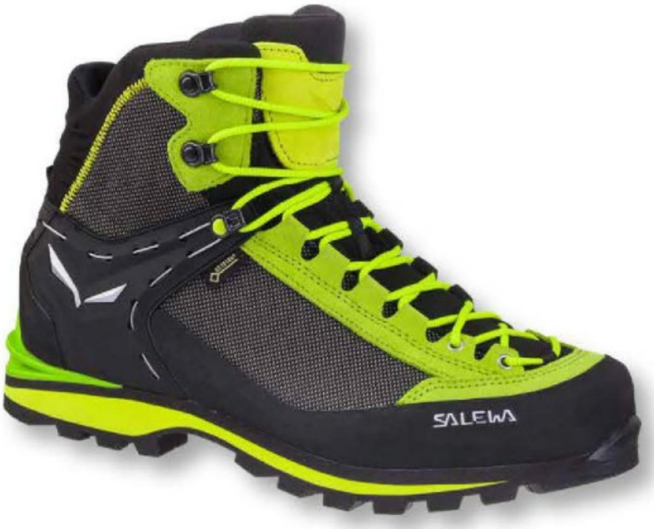
The Rapace GTX is a lightweight mountaineering boot, featuring a hard-wearing nubuck upper with waterproof breathable GORE-TEX® protection. The 3F System provides ankle support, flexibility and a perfect fit. Our Bilight TPU technology and Nylon + 27% Fiberglass in the midsole ensures an ergonomic hold and allows the use of semi-automatic crampons. There's a full rubber rand, and the Vibram WTC outsole has an aggressive tread pattern that gives good traction.
Fit: WIDE / Weight: (M) 740 g (W) 615 g (pictured)
WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA





SALEWA ORTLES LIGHT MID POWERTEX RRP: $659.90

This lightweight, comfortable mid-cut boot is both technical and agile. The Pomoca Alpine Light outsole ensures increased grip and traction on varied terrain. The Ankle Protector System wraps the foot, providing stability and protection from rock and scree. The Edging Plate technology blends targeted stiffness for edging stability and enhanced climbing performance with balanced flex and rebound for hiking comfort. The tough nylon fabric is reinforced with high-tenacity, abrasion-resistant, protective TPU stitching and film. It features our PFC-free waterproof and breathable Powertex® membrane, and the built-in gaiter helps to keeps out trail debris.
Fit: STANDARD / Weight (M) 575 g (pictured) (W) 425 g
WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA



SALEWA CROW GORE-TEX® RRP: $599.90

The Crow GTX is a versatile mountaineering boot designed for mixed summer use on general alpine terrain. Featuring an abrasion-resistant fabric upper, full rubber rand and a waterproof GORE-TEX® lining. The sole unit has a stiff Nylon + 27% Fiberglass Insole, and a crampon-compatible Vibram New Mulaz outsole. The Crow GTX integrates SALEWA technologies to offer the Alpine Fit 100% blister free guarantee: The 3F System for firm ankle and heel support ensures that it fits perfectly around your foot, and the Flex Collar enhances comfort during descents.
Fit: STANDARD / Weight (M) 675 g (pictured) (W) 570 g
WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA

LIFESTRAW GO 2.0 WATER FILTER BOTTLE 22OZ RRP $59.99

LifeStraw Go Series is the ultimate sidekick for safer, better-tasting water for travel and everyday use.

The advanced 2-stage filter improves taste and protects against bacteria, parasites, microplastics, chlorine, silt, sand, and cloudiness. The BPA-free bottle is made from 50% post-consumer recycled plastic.

- The carbon filter reduces chlorine, odors + organic chemical matter
- The membrane microfilter lasts up to 4,000L (about five years of daily use) and the equivalent to 8,000 single use plastic water bottles.
- Carbon filter lasts up to 100L (about two months).
- LifeStraw is proud to be a B Corp and Climate Neutral Certified brand
- For every purchase, a child in need receives safe drinking water for a year.

WWW.SOUTHERNAPPROACH.CO.NZ

Real Meals
FREEZE DRIED
Bircher Muesli
Chocolate Cake Pudding
Cooked in Nelson, New Zealand

REAL MEALS

Premium freeze-dried meals, crafted by adventurers and prepared by chefs. Fuel your adventures from start to finish!

Bircher Muesli: RRP: $17.95

Deliciously creamy with whole oats, fruits, and honey—perfectly energising for your morning adventure!

Chocolate Cake Pudding: RRP: $17.95

Indulge in rich, velvety chocolate bliss that melts in your mouth—an irresistible dessert treat!

WWW.REALMEALS.CO.NZ

KEA KIT | OUTDOOR SURVIVAL SYSTEM

The First Aid & Survival System built for every adventure. Modular Organisation & Tough Materials mean you will always be ready to respond. Available in 2 sizes, you can choose to build your kit with our range of gear or just pack your own.

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KEA GEAR REPAIR
KEA FIRE STARTING
KEA KIT XL
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VEHICLE & CAMPING OUTDOOR SURVIVAL SYSTEM
KEA ADVANCED MEDICAL
KEA BASIC MEDICAL

THAT'S IT.
BLISTER STOP WOOL
ANTI-CHAFE GEL
FIRST AID GEL

THAT'S IT HIKERS BUNDLE RRP: $58.95

Save with our Hikers Bundle, perfect for your next mission on the trails! The That's It Hikers Bundle features our Anti Chafe Gel, Blister Stop Wool and First Aid Gel. Using our High Grade NZ Mānuka Oil, our products will help protect you from those chafing niggles, nasty blisters and help repair cuts, scrapes and grazes. Exclusively available online with free shipping in NZ.

Shop online at **WWW.THATSIT.NZ**

KIWI ULTRALIGHT SILK FITTED SHEETS RRP: $95.00

Never stick to a hut mat again! This ultralight fitted sheet fits almost all DOC Hut mattresses using sewn-in elastic. Made using 100% ripstop silk, it pairs with a quilt like silk liners pair with sleeping bags. The perfect luxury item for the Kiwi tramper. Includes attached stuff sack for quick storage. Weight 110g.

WWW.KIWIULTRALIGHT.CO.NZ

EXPED ULTRA 0 SLEEPING BAG (MEDIUM)
RRP: $929.99

An ultralight bag (550g) utilising 850+ loft goose down in a Pertex Quantum shell. Features a 3D triangular footbox, zipper draft flap an adjustable elliptical draft collar. 6C/2C/-13C

WWW.BIVOUAC.CO.NZ

BEAR COTTAGE POSSUM THROW
RRP: FROM $1125.00

This luxury possum fur throws range in size from 1.3m x 0.9m in size to 2.5m x 2.0m and backed in black velvet . They come in natural brown and grey

WWW.BEARCOTTAGE.CO.NZ

YETI LOADOUT® GOBOX30 GEAR CASE RRP: $400.00

Dustproof, waterproof, and virtually indestructible, it's built to be packed up, hauled out, and hold up to whatever you throw at it.

WWW.NZ.YETI.COM

THIS IS OUR OUTDOORS.

Where our iconic tree stands as a tall testament to our commitment to the space.

In the heartbeat of nature, find the rhythm of your adventure. Create your own world of vast terrain, untouched trails, and the freedom to define what the outdoors can mean to you.

www.timberland.co.nz

PORTABLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE

Whether you're tramping deep into the bush, exploring the open road in a campervan, or paddling along rugged coastlines, nature offers an escape from the digital demands of modern life. Yet, even in the wild, we increasingly rely on electronic devices—smartphones, cameras, GPS units, and satellite messengers—to navigate, capture memories, and ensure safety.

This growing reliance has made portable power solutions an essential tool. From compact power banks to solar-powered stations, these devices ensure your gadgets stay charged, even when you're miles from the nearest outlet. Here's your guide to understanding portable power and choosing the right gear for your next adventure.

THE POWER SUPPLY CHAIN

In simple terms portable power devices store energy in rechargeable batteries, which can then be used to charge your electronics. The process involves three key elements:

1. Power Source: Home electricity, vehicle outlets, or solar panels.
2. Portable Power Device: Power banks or stations that store energy.
3. Your Devices: Smartphones, cameras, or other electronics.

Knowing how these components interact will help you build an efficient system for staying powered off-grid.

POWER SOURCES

Your choice of power source depends on accessibility and the speed of recharging:

- AC Power (Wall Outlet): The fastest option; ideal for pre-trip preparation.
- 12V DC (Car Charger): Convenient for vehicle-based adventures.
- USB: Flexible but slower; commonly used for multiple power sources.
- Solar Panels: Excellent for extended off-grid trips but slower and weather-dependent.
- Kinetic Motion: A niche option, typically requiring specialised devices.

For off-grid adventurers, solar energy is often the most practical option. For example Xtorm Xtreme Solar Panel SolarBooster, from Outdoor Action Photovoltaic (PV) cells in solar panels convert sunlight into electricity, which can recharge devices directly or store energy in portable power banks.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PORTABLE POWER

Trip Duration

- For weekend trips, a lightweight power bank is often sufficient.
- For multi-day or remote excursions, supplement with solar panels or larger power stations.

Mode of Travel

- On-the-Go Solar Charging: Ideal for cycle touring, sea kayaking, or backpacking in open terrain.
- Shaded Areas: Solar panels are less effective in forests or canyons.

Consider alternatives like pre-charged power banks.

Device Battery Type

- If your devices use AA or AAA batteries, a solar charger that recharges spare sets is a practical solution.

Weight vs. Capacity

- Heavier power packs offer more charges but may be overkill for short trips. Assess whether the added weight is worth the benefit.

STORAGE CAPACITY: HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

The capacity of a power bank or station determines how much charge it can store and is measured in milliamp hours (mAh), amp hours (Ah), or watt hours (Wh). Larger capacities translate to heavier, bulkier units. For example:

- A compact 10,000 mAh power bank (e.g., Xtorm Xtreme Rugged Power Bank) can charge a smartphone two to three times, ideal for short trips (we actually manged to charge a phone 4 times and a GoPro camera.
- High-capacity portable power stations (e.g., BioLite Base Charge 1500) can power small appliances and multiple devices, making them perfect for extended trips or emergency backups.

FEATURES TO CONSIDER

Modern portable power devices often include USB-A and USB-C ports, screens to monitor battery status, and even smartphone apps for precise tracking. When selecting a device, consider the following:

- Ease of Use: Can you read the display in sunlight?
- Durability: Will it withstand harsh outdoor conditions?
- Attachment Points: Can the solar panel be securely mounted or staked down?

PORTABLE POWER: A RELIABLE COMPANION

While portable power devices offer essential support, they're not a guarantee of endless energy. All rechargeable batteries have a finite lifespan, typically measured in discharge/recharge cycles. Most units provide 500–1,000 cycles, so invest in a quality device for long-term reliability.

With the right combination of preparation and technology, staying powered off-grid is no longer a challenge—it's an essential.

XTORM XTREME RUGGED POWER BANK 20.000 MAH

The Xtorm Xtreme Rugged Power Bank 20.000 mAh is the ultimate survival gadget to keep you going during your outdoor adventures. It allows you to charge your mobile devices quickly wherever you are.

Prime Features

- 20.000mAh internal battery
- Charges 3 devices at the same time
- Integrated Flashlight

Charge time: 3 hours
Battery storage capacity: 10.400 mAh
Dimensions: 19cm x 9cm x 2.5cm
Weight: 540 g
Ruggedness: IP65 Water Resistant
Extras: Inbuilt flashlight, 2 year warranty
Star Rating ★★★★★
www.outdooraction.co.nz

BIOLITE CHARGE 100 MAX

A power bank designed to keep up with daily life, the Charge 100 Max can power multiple devices at once - and fast. USB-C ports deliver a reliable charge to laptops, earbuds, hotspots and more while the wireless charging keeps phones and tablets running without a cord.

Prime Features

- Wireless Charging
- Multiple devices

Charge time: 2 hours
Battery storage capacity: 25,000mAh
Dimensions: 14.0 x 11.2 x 3.5 cm
Weight: 580g
Star Rating ★★★★★
www.e.ampro.co.nz

GOAL ZERO FLIP 24 POWER BANK

The Flip 24 Power Bank is a small power bank ideal when just one charge isn't enough while you are on the go. Named for its flip out USB port which makes it ideal for keeping your phone or other small USB devices charged while you are on the go.

Prime Features

- Size
- Easy to use: no on/off buttons to mess with, simply plug in your cable and charge up
- Built-in flip-out USB tip for easy recharging

Charge time: 4 hours
Battery storage capacity: 6,700 mAh
Dimensions: 9.4 x 4.1 x 2.1cm
Weight: 130 g
Star Rating ★★★★
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Prime Features

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- Compact
- Price

Charge time: 2 hours by 18W USB-C PD
Battery storage capacity: 6,000 mAh
Dimensions: 12.8 x 7.5 x 1.4cm
Weight: 165 g
Ruggedness: Drop tested not waterproof
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The Xtorm 20W Fuel Series 4 Solar Power Bank - 10000 mAh is a solar charger that gives you the freedom and energy to go anywhere you want, making it perfect for all your adventures.

Prime Features

- Solar charging
- LED flashlight

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Battery storage capacity: 10,000mAh
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SECRET WEAPON?:
MY ADVENTURE TRAVEL AGENT!

Words and images by Phil Clark,
Mad about Travel

Have you always wanted to trek to Everest Basecamp, climb Kilimanjaro, or dive the Galápagos but don't know where to start amid the endless options? Use a professional specialist travel agent like Mad About Travel!

As adventurers, we crave experiences off the beaten path. We love eyeing epic mountain biking, skiing, and trekking holidays, so it makes sense to seek advice from people who've made it their career.

Here's the rub: the further off the beaten path you go, the harder it becomes to piece together flights, transfers, accommodations, and tours. Tackling it all yourself can quickly morph into an overwhelming logistical nightmare. Enter the travel agent—your not-so-secret weapon to ensure your dream adventure doesn't turn into a costly misstep.

Expertise You Can't Google

Sure, the internet is vast, but it's not always reliable. A specialist agent brings something invaluable: firsthand experience. They know how to acclimatize to high altitude (go slow, drink lots, enjoy the scenery), the best coffee spot at SilverStar ski resort (Bugaboos Bakery), and how to navigate from Narita Airport to Nozawa Onsen by train. They'll also know which Galápagos liveaboards offer nitrox or the trek/train options for visiting Machu Picchu. Their insights are gold, helping you avoid rookie mistakes and discover hidden gems.

Time is Money—and Sanity

How many hours will you spend sifting through blogs, comparing airline deals, or decoding cancellation policies? A travel agent handles this heavy lifting, creating a tailored itinerary quickly and efficiently. They optimize your time, ensuring flights align with check-ins and transfers are seamless. No more wasting precious vacation hours stuck in transit.

Peace of Mind When Things Go Sideways

Adventures are unpredictable—that's half the fun. But when things go wrong, like a snowstorm stranding you in Vancouver, a travel agent becomes your lifeline. They'll troubleshoot issues, rebook flights, or chase lost luggage while you focus on enjoying the journey. Their experience means they solve problems you might not know how to tackle.

Access to Exclusive Perks

Specialist agents have insider connections. Whether it's securing ski-in/ski-out apartments with private hot tubs or arranging heli-biking trips in British Columbia, they can unlock perks and deals beyond your reach. Even on a budget, they stretch your dollar with bundled packages and value-added extras.

Customization is Key

Adventure travel is highly specialized. Whether your dream involves diving with sharks or trekking Annapurna, agents craft bespoke itineraries tailored to your interests, pace, and budget. They'll also ensure activities suit your skill level, so you're not overwhelmed or underwhelmed.

They Know the Rules (So You Don't Have To)

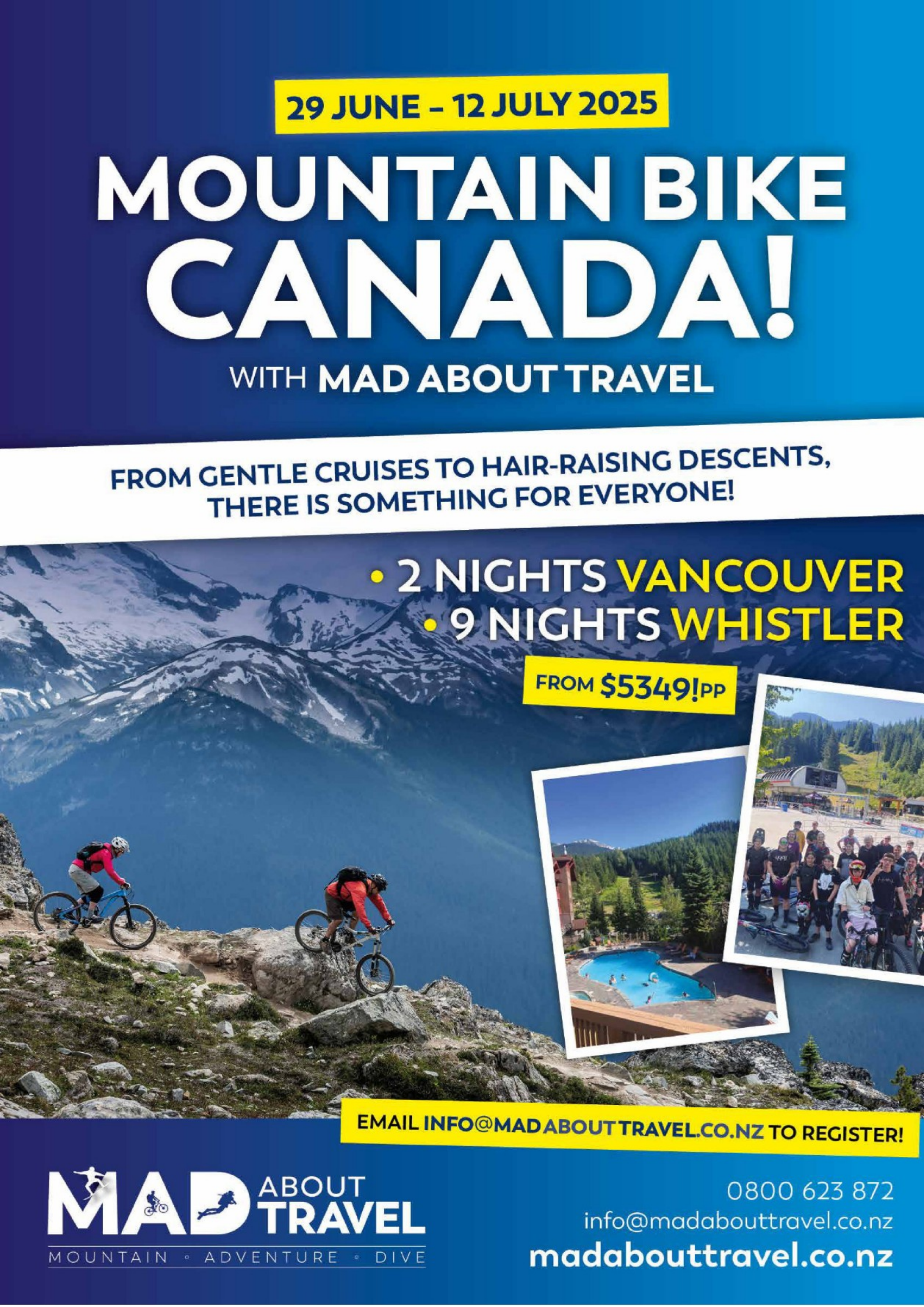
Adventure travel often involves regulations and permits. From national park passes in Patagonia to conservation laws in the Galápagos, agents stay on top of these requirements, handling the fine print so you can focus on the fun.

Value Far Beyond the Fee

Yes, agents charge fees, but think of it as an investment. They save you time, protect your funds in trust accounts, and often prevent costly mistakes. Plus, their expertise ensures your money goes toward experiences, not errors.

Adventure holidays are too epic and complex to leave to chance. A specialist travel agent isn't just a planner; they're your advocate, problem-solver, and insider guide. The DIY route might work for a simple city break, but when your dream involves navigating wild terrains or crossing continents, their expertise is priceless. Let them sweat the details so you can focus on what truly matters: the adventure itself.

To help plan your next adventure, contact the team at **www.madabouttravel.co.nz**



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PLASTIMO

SAILING:
THE ULTIMATE WAY TO EXPLORE TAHITI

Words and images by Steve Dickinson

When you think of Tahiti, visions of swaying palms, white sand beaches, and idyllic overwater bungalows likely come to mind. But the true heart of Tahiti lies beyond the postcard-perfect shores—in the lagoons. Once you've experienced life from the water, being landbound feels like a compromise. Sailing reveals a side of Tahiti that most visitors never see, yet in so many ways that we will outline here, it is the ideal way to visit.

Recently, we spent a week with Tahiti Yacht Charters, based in Raiatea, and even the word "stunning" doesn't do it justice. From the service to the scenery, every aspect of the trip delivered a level of luxury and authenticity that's hard to find anywhere else.

More Than a Yacht: A Gateway to Adventure
Sailing in Tahiti isn't just about being on the water—it's about the experience of waiting at every stop. With a professional captain as your guide, you'll gain access to local gems like pearl farms, vanilla plantations, and tucked-away mountain trails; our captain for the trip, Ari, knew every little secret, from the best morning without wind to where the manta rays swamped in the evening. Apart from the obvious safety factor havigfn a captain on board not only took away any worry b ut also too away to need to seach if you waned to surf, paddlebaord or just watch the sunset Ari knew the best option.

For those looking to personalise their journey, a private charter allows you to tailor every detail. Whether you're travelling with friends, family, or a partner, your itinerary can be as adventurous or as indulgent as you like.

The Allure of Polynesian Lagoons
Polynesia's lagoons are like no other. Protected by coral reefs, these calm waters create a serene sailing environment, free from the rolling swells of the open ocean. It's the perfect combination of tranquility and exploration. Imagine waking up each morning to pristine views, stepping off your yacht onto an untouched beach, or diving into crystal-clear waters just steps from your berth.

Unlike many over-touristed destinations, the Islands of Tahiti retain a sense of authenticity and exclusivity. When you sail, you'll discover real secluded bays and islands that feel like private paradises—places where nature thrives and the bustle of tourism fades away.
Sailing is also one of the most eco-conscious ways to explore Tahiti. The Polynesian connection to the ocean, or Moana, is profound, and preserving the pristine environment is integral to the local way of life. By choosing to sail, you'll minimize your impact while supporting a culture that celebrates harmony with nature.

RS 5.1
mana 59

Captin Arii taking off in style

Bora Bora sunset

Best Time to Visit: The ideal months are March to November, with June and September offering a perfect balance of favorable weather and fewer crowds. July and August are peak seasons, so plan well in advance if travelling during these months.

Length of Stay: Plan for at least 11 days to fully experience the Leeward Islands—Raiatea, Taha'a, Huahine, and Bora Bora. If time allows, extend your trip to 15 days to include Maupiti, conditions permitting.

Why a Catamaran? Catamarans are perfect for exploring Tahiti's lagoons. With their spacious decks, stability, and shallow draft, they offer a hotel-like experience on the water, comparable to the famed overwater bungalows—but with the added freedom to change your view whenever you wish.

When to Book: With a limited number of yachts available, booking 6–9 months in advance is highly recommended. This is especially true if you're planning an August holiday, as both boats and flights fill up quickly.

Why Base in Raiatea? Located at the heart of the Leeward Islands, Raiatea is the ideal starting point for your Polynesian adventure. The island is a short 40-minute flight from Tahiti and Moorea, and just 15 minutes from Bora Bora and Huahine. Tahiti Yacht Charter's base at Marina Apooiti is conveniently close to the airport and town, making it easy to embark on your journey.

Onboard Tips

What to Bring: Pack light but smart—swimwear, water shoes, sunscreen, and a light sweater for cooler evenings. Rain gear and camera equipment are must-haves for capturing those once-in-a-lifetime moments.

Provisions: Groceries and beverages can be pre-ordered and delivered to your yacht. Be sure to include cleaning supplies and essentials, as boats are delivered bare for hygiene reasons unless you opt for a hostess and full board service.

Activities: While onboard, enjoy water sports like snorkelling and paddleboarding. Local clubs on each island offer equipment and guided dives for scuba diving. Do you prefer surfing or kiteboarding? Bring your own gear, and your skipper will guide you to the best spots.

A Tahitian Sailing Experience Awaits Sailing the Islands of Tahiti is more than a holiday—it's an immersion into a way of life that celebrates natural beauty, cultural richness, and serene exploration. From the turquoise lagoons to the warmth of the Polynesian people, every moment onboard will leave you with memories to treasure for a lifetime.

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PADDLING THROUGH PARADISE

From limestone caves to traditional villages, embark on a kayaking adventure that unveils the natural and cultural beauty of Fiji's Yasawa Islands over seven unforgettable days.

My paddle slices through the aquamarine water, creating ripples that shimmer in the morning sun. Above, frigatebirds wheel in the bright sky. My arms ache slightly from the preceding days of paddling, but the dramatic scene before us urges me onward – the limestone cliffs of Sawa-I-Lau, their jagged edges softened by lush greenery.

We approach the towering cliffs, and I rest my paddle across my lap, letting my kayak drift before landing on a small beach. We leave our kayaks under the watchful eyes of the locals and I follow our guide through a narrow cave entrance, which opens into a world of emerald and turquoise. Sunlight filters through a crack in the ceiling, casting beams over the water.

The coolness of the cavern wraps around me, the only sound the echo of water gently lapping against stone.
We dive in and, grinning, our guide Elijah, beckons us toward a hidden tunnel he knows. Despite countless visits, it's clear the caves still awe him – and his excitement is infectious. Sione, our local guide, promptly disappears under the water and, one by one we follow him swimming into another chamber, carefully ducking our heads under the water into the unknown to emerge into a maze of passageways lit by Sione's torchlight.

Sione shares that Sawa-I-Lau isn't just a geological wonder – it holds deep cultural significance. Legend has it that these cliffs and caves once sheltered a Fijian chief fleeing from invaders. I look around, trying to grasp the layers of history – human and natural – that have shaped this special place. Usually, the word awesome feels overused, but here, it doesn't seem enough.

Discovering Fiji's Heart
When I signed up for this guided kayaking trip with Aussie company Southern Sea Ventures (SSV), I was after more than a typical beachside getaway. I wanted an adventure, and to experience a deeper connection with Fiji's natural beauty and cultural richness.

Mooning over the trip notes ahead of time, I eagerly anticipated seven days of paddling through Fiji's Yasawas, a chain of volcanic islands known for their jagged peaks, turquoise lagoons, and vibrant reefs. Along with paddling, there would be opportunities for snorkeling, swimming, and hiking – it all sounded like a dream. I couldn't wait to pack my bags and double-check the gear list.

I'd learned that SSV had been guiding tours in the Yasawas for nearly 40 years. They pioneered kayaking tours in the area, and it was clear they knew their stuff. The plan was to paddle a 50km loop through four of the northern Yasawa Islands, camping in comfortable bell-style tents at our base on Tavewa Island and spending two nights camping alongside a traditional Fijian village. This was the part I was most excited about.

PACKHORSE

FAST FACTS

Trip: Fiji Yasawa Tropical Island Dreaming sea kayak adventure with SSV. SSV also offers a longer expedition-style trip in the Yasawas for more experienced paddlers or those seeking a more challenging adventure.
Dates: Frequent departures in May and June
Length: 7 Days
Grade: Easy to moderate
Cost: From AU $3590 (2025)
Find out more & book: Visit southernseaventures.com or email ssvtrips@southernseaventures.com

"We spot kids running down the beach, waving and shouting "bula!" in cheerful greeting. SSV has visited this village for over 30 years, forming close bonds with the community that now spans generations."

On our first night in Nadi, we met our guides – Elijah, an Aussie who leads SSV adventures worldwide, and Sione and Sami, our local Fijian guides. Their warmth, anecdotes and local insights would make the experience unforgettable. The next morning, we boarded the Yasawa Flyer bound for Tavewa Island, and our adventure began.

Cultural Connection: Navotua Village

It's Day 4, and we've packed up our gear for the part of the trip I've been most eager to experience. After a breakfast of fresh fruit and traditional roti, we set off in our kayaks. The destination: Navotua, a small village on the northern tip of Nacula Island, where we'll camp for the next two nights.

Though my paddling experience had been limited to a few weekends at home in Sydney, I'm now growing confident. Our guides offer helpful tips on technique, and I feel increasingly comfortable with the rhythm of the daily paddles.

As the tropical sun warms the morning, we take a break to snorkel and swim in the fringing reefs just off the beach. The water is crystal clear, and the marine life is vibrant – this is the Fiji I've been dreaming of. We paddle onward, rounding the point of Nacula Island, until Navotua comes into view. As we approach the shore, we spot kids running down the beach, waving and shouting "bula!" in cheerful greeting. SSV has visited this village for over 30 years, forming close bonds with the community that now spans generations.

We unload our kayaks and follow the villagers to a shaded clearing where we set up camp. That evening, we join the village chief for a traditional kava ceremony. Sitting on woven mats, we share stories and sip the earthy drink, followed by a delicious meal of fresh fish, tropical salads, and the sweetest mangoes I've ever tasted.

As I lie in my tent that night, the sounds of the village fading into the distance, I feel the rhythm of the island seep into me – the steady flow of the water, the warmth of the people, and the peaceful hum of the tropical night.

A Final Taste of Paradise

The final day seems to arrive far too quickly. There was a collective sense of reflection and slight melancholy as we headed back to base camp from Navotua for a final night before departing the next day. Before we wrap up, we're spending the morning exploring the reefs off Tavewa Island and I'm eager for one last snorkel before the adventure ends.

As the guides pack away camp and kayaks, I slip back into the warm water one final time. A vibrant world of coral and marine life unfolds beneath me – schools of fish shimmer and clownfish dart between anemones. I feel an involuntary grin spread beneath my snorkel.

And then, the Yasawa Flyer is there, waiting to whisk us back to Denarau Marina. The catamaran speeds across the same azure waters we've paddled over for the past seven days and I'm struck by the contrast – where the boat now surges forward with purpose, the kayaks glided steadily, drawing us into the slow rhythm of the islands. As the mainland comes into sight, I resolve to carry that rhythm with me, along with the warmth of Fiji and the new friendships I've made. This, I know, won't be my last paddling adventure.

SSV

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Jungle Coral image by David Kirkland

DIVING IN THE SOLOMONS:

NO WETSUIT REQUIRED

Words by Mike Parker Brown

Just what makes the Solomon Islands such a mecca for lovers of the underwater world? The answer is simple – the 992 islands and unspoilt coral reefs making up these 'Hapi Isles', literally teem with huge numbers and varieties of marine life.

Add to this the literally hundreds of shipwrecks and downed aircraft that litter the seabed, so much so that in one area just a short journey from Honiara, the country's bustling capital, has been renamed 'Iron Bottom Sound'.

Throw in technicolour coral pastures, steep walls, shallow reefs, tunnels, drop-offs, and a veritable pot pourri of demersal, reef and pelagic fish which literally swarm these bath warm waters and the result is a diver's paradise and definitely 'no wetsuit required'.

Most of the known accessible diving in the Solomon is on Guadalcanal and the Western Province – the region to the northwest of the archipelago but two liveaboard dive boat oprtions – Bilikiki Cruises and Master Liveaboard - operate in these waters – and newly discovered dive sites are opening up on a regular basis.

But each and every inch of this South Pacific paradise offers something for someone. So where to go? While the destination abounds with amazing dive sites – some of which still lie waiting to be discovered – the following are some of the more popular, certainly more accessible dive sites

Honiara: Honiara is the perfect location from which to start a Solomon Islands dive experience. Walk off beach dive sites include two Japanese vessels - Bonegi 1 and Bonegi 2 - are easily arranged and a short boat ride away lies Tulagi, the venue for the well-known dive site 'Twin Tunnels' and the many wrecks lying below Ghuvatu Harbour.

The Marovo Lagoon: Described by author James Michener as the 'eighth wonder of the world' and now recommended for a World Heritage listing, the Marovo Lagoon is renowned as one of the best locations for diving in the Solomon Islands. Mantas and hammerheads abound along with barracuda, eagle rays and swarms of jacks.

Munda: Munda on the Vona Lagoon has it all. Swim-through caves, wrecks of planes and boats all within a short boat ride and reefs right where the coral is still in pristine condition.

Gizo: Offering a huge variety of spectacular dive sites, divers visiting Gizo – and the home of the very reputable Dive Gizo - can choose from Grand Central Station which boasts the highest fish count in the world with more than 275 species recorded in its teeming waters. Wreck enthusiasts too are more than catered for with a 440-foot Japanese freighter, the Toa Maru and an almost fully-intact US Hellcat fighter aircraft.

Santa Isabel: Opening up a whole new underwater realm for the destination, Papatura Island Retreat on Santa Isabel has recently opened its new dive operation – Papatura Dive. To date very few divers have had the opportunity to explore the area which, already renowned as one of the Solomon Islands' best surf and fishing locations, offers SCUBA enthusiasts a 'beyond spoilt' choice of options in a plethora of amazing dive spots.

Shore dives from the main beach offer access to huge fan corals and giant barrel sponges while a five-minute boat ride will take divers to a wide variety of technicolour reefs and marine life boasting a huge array of species - from Moray eels, colourful passionfruit trout, big GTs and Blue spotted trevally to Black tip reef sharks, Spanish mackerel and barracuda to name just a few.

The Russell Islands: A group of islands lying 40 kilometres off the northern tip of Guadalcanal, the Russell Islands offer special geological features that make for iconic dives. These include the Mirror Pond Cave and Bat Cave where divers surface in an ocean water pool surrounded by jungle and the Leru Cut, a 20-metre deep slot, some three-divers wide which penetrates deep into the jungle.

SEVEN 'MUST DO' DIVES

Having explored the Solomon Islands underwater world for many years, Dive Adventures Ewa Banaszek is considered by many a foremost expert on what the destination has to offer. These are her seven 'must do dives':

Marovo Lagoon - Kitcha White Wall

The southern side of Kicha plunges vertically from a 5-meter reef top into abyssal depths, featuring a series of spectacular bluffs and canyons. On the southwest corner, between 25 and 35 meters, lies the White Wall—an immense overhanging rockface completely covered with pure white, shade-loving soft corals. Combined with the distant sounds of the Kavachi submarine volcano, this creates a hallucinatory spectacle and an exciting, one-of-a-kind dive. As you ascend from the White Wall, heading southeast along the bluffs and canyons, you'll reach a dip in the reef edge that hosts the largest school of barracuda I've seen in the Solomons. Due to its location on the exposed southern side of Kicha, this dive requires calm weather and is often inaccessible during the trade wind season from June through September.

Marovo Lagoon - Uepi Island Resort) BOTCH (Bottom of the Channel)

This is a sensational dive directly off the Uepi dive jetty. The dive begins by entering the water at the jetty and descending to around 30 meters along the wall. As you head into the passage, you'll encounter an underwater sand dune that rises about 2 meters from the bottom. The dune follows the current line through the channel, reaching a maximum depth of around 40 meters. Visibility at the bottom often exceeds 40 meters, offering a clear view of the unique sandy habitat.

Gizo - Grand Central Station

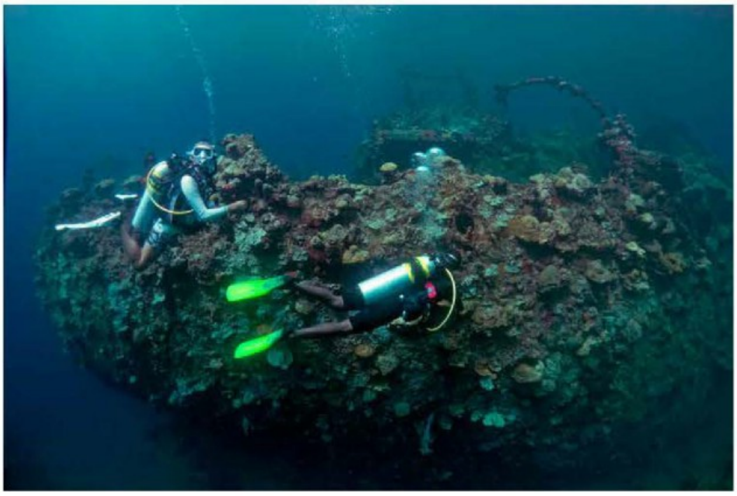
If you're looking for a dive site packed with marine life, this is the one for you. Located on the north-west tip of the island where two currents meet, the site boasts large corals in a variety of colours, sizes, and shapes. You'll encounter schools of reef fish, as well as sharks, trevally, and batfish.

Munda - The Cave of Custom Shark

The Cave of the Kastom Shark is approximately a 40-minute boat ride from Munda and is accessed by a short walk through the mangroves onto the island. The entry is a pool about 2 meters wide, leading down a vertical shaft to two large chambers connected by a narrow tunnel. After penetrating the cave, divers exit onto a spectacular reef wall, where schools of giant bumphead parrotfish often swim, and sightings of sharks and turtles are often too. There's also a chance to encounter pygmy seahorses there.

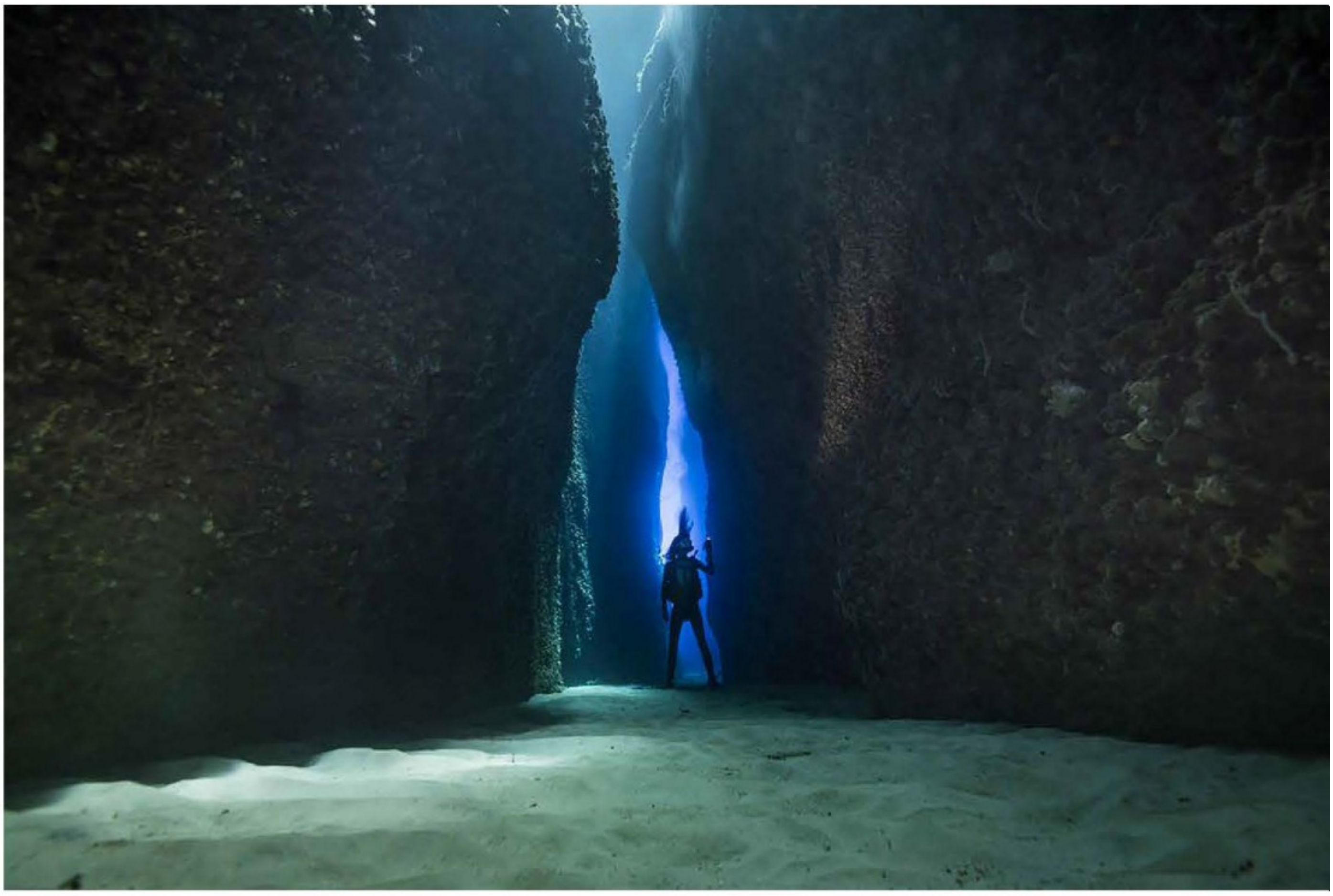
Bilikiki Cruises Image by Jo O'Shea

Marovo Lagoon Image by Chris McLennan

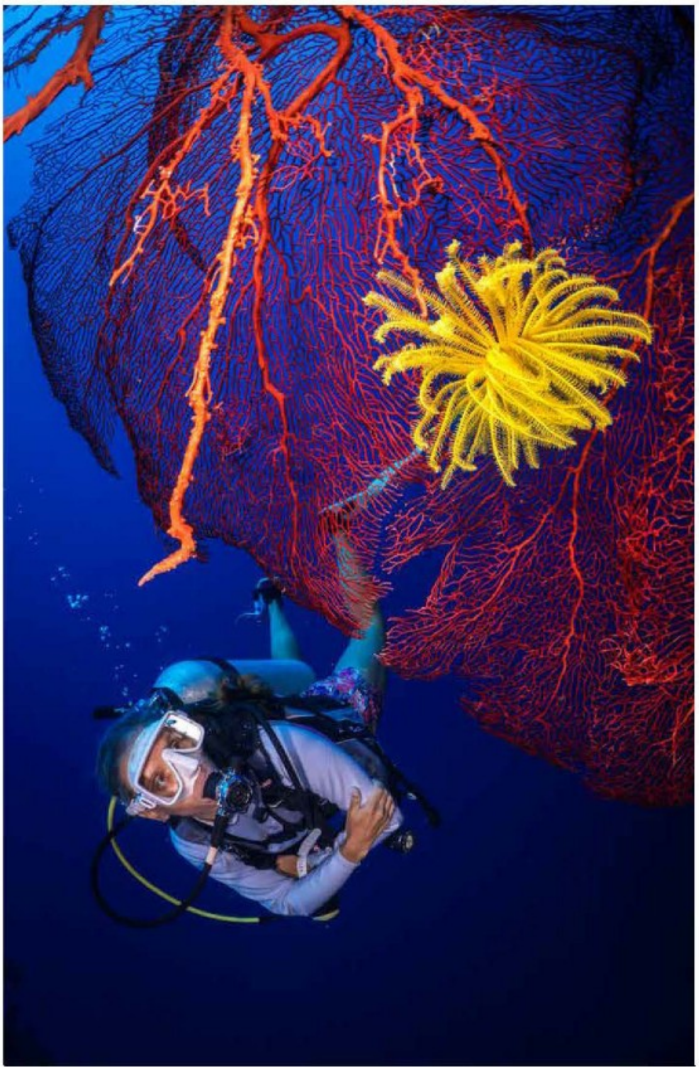


WWII Wreck Diving, Gizo Image by David Kirkland

Grand Central Station, Gizo\ Image by Chris McLennon



Leru Cut in the Russell Isalnds. Image by Matt Smith



Colourful coral, Image by Gerald Rambert

The Russell Islands - Leru Cut
You enter the site just outside the mouth of a chasm that cuts deep into the island. After a brief surface interval, you descend to a depth between 8 and 12 meters. The sheer walls drop from the surface to approximately 20 meters. In the nooks, you can spot nudibranchs, small octopuses, and flame scallops. However, the real beauty of the dive lies in the interplay of light on the walls. The dive is best done between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., as the direct overhead sun creates a stunning kaleidoscope of light beams in the narrow channel. As you reach the end of the chasm (after approximately 100 meters of swimming), you surface in the middle of the jungle.

Honiara - Bonegi One (Depth range 3m – 57m)
The Japanese transport ship Hirokawa Maru was attacked by American dive bombers and beached on November 14, 1942. The wreck lies bow to shore on its port side and serves as an excellent dive site. In the shallows, you'll find plethora of corals and abundant fish life, while pelagic species can be seen at greater depths. Access in and out of the wreck is both easy and safe, making it ideal for exploration.

Tulagi - Aaron Ward (Depth range 53m - 74m).
Discovered in 1995, the Aaron Ward is the only diveable destroyer in the Solomon Islands. Mortally wounded by Japanese aircraft on April 7th, 1943, she managed to limp as far as Tinete Point before sinking, taking 27 of her crew with her. The impressive wreck now sits upright and intact on a sandy bottom, boasting an extensive arsenal of large guns. This awe-inspiring dive site is reserved for very experienced divers due to its depth and complexity

Tulagi - Twin Tunnels
The tunnels are ancient lava tubes that begin atop a patch reef and drop vertically to about 35 meters. The twin tunnels then merge into a single horizontal tunnel that exits onto the reef wall at 40 meters. Upon exiting, you are greeted by a mass of fish swarming around the reef, with plenty of pelagic action. Sharks, dogtooth tuna, giant trevally, and barracuda are commonly seen. This is a "must-do" dive!

For more information, visit **www.visitsolomons.com.sb.**

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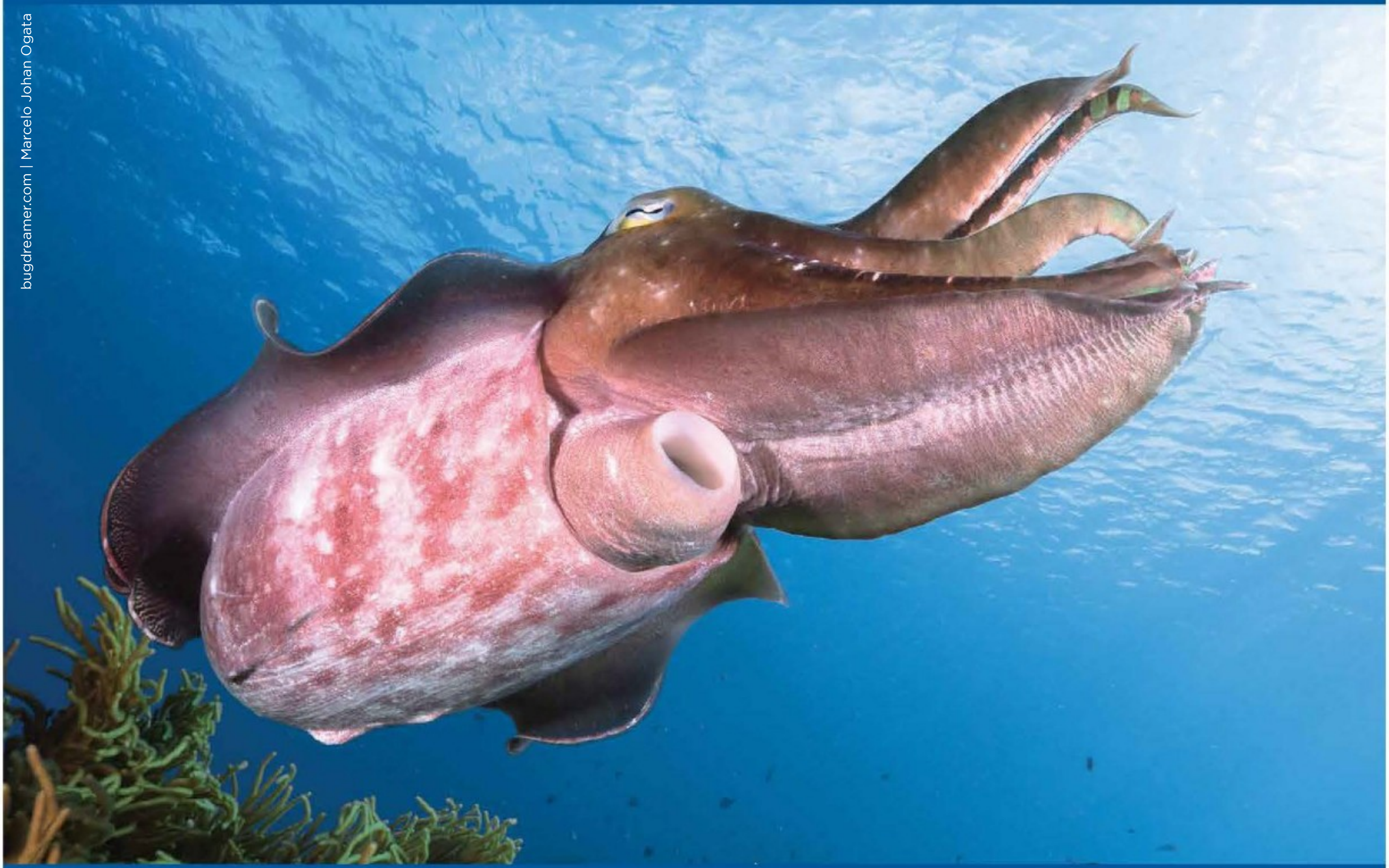

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Lachie Porter exlores the underworld of Niue with his family

NIUE:
TAKING FAMILY ADVENTURES TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Images by David Kirkland

There comes a time when an ideal family holiday shifts from Kids Clubs, to wanting to create lifelong memories experiencing epic adventures together. This is where Niue takes active family holidays to the next level – both above and below the water.

Swimming with humpback whales, catching 30+ kilo wahoo and tuna, scuba diving or snorkelling in gin-clear water, caving, great walks and nighttime missions catching giant coconut crab are just a few of the experiences on offer that you can do as a family.

After a quick three-and-a-half-hour flight from Auckland, you are greeted with not only warm temperatures all year round, but the most warm and hospitable welcome possible. Driving or biking the – 64km around it's ring road is easy and discovering the tracks and well sign posted sites becomes an addiction. Niue is only one island, so one giant 'resort' to uncover.

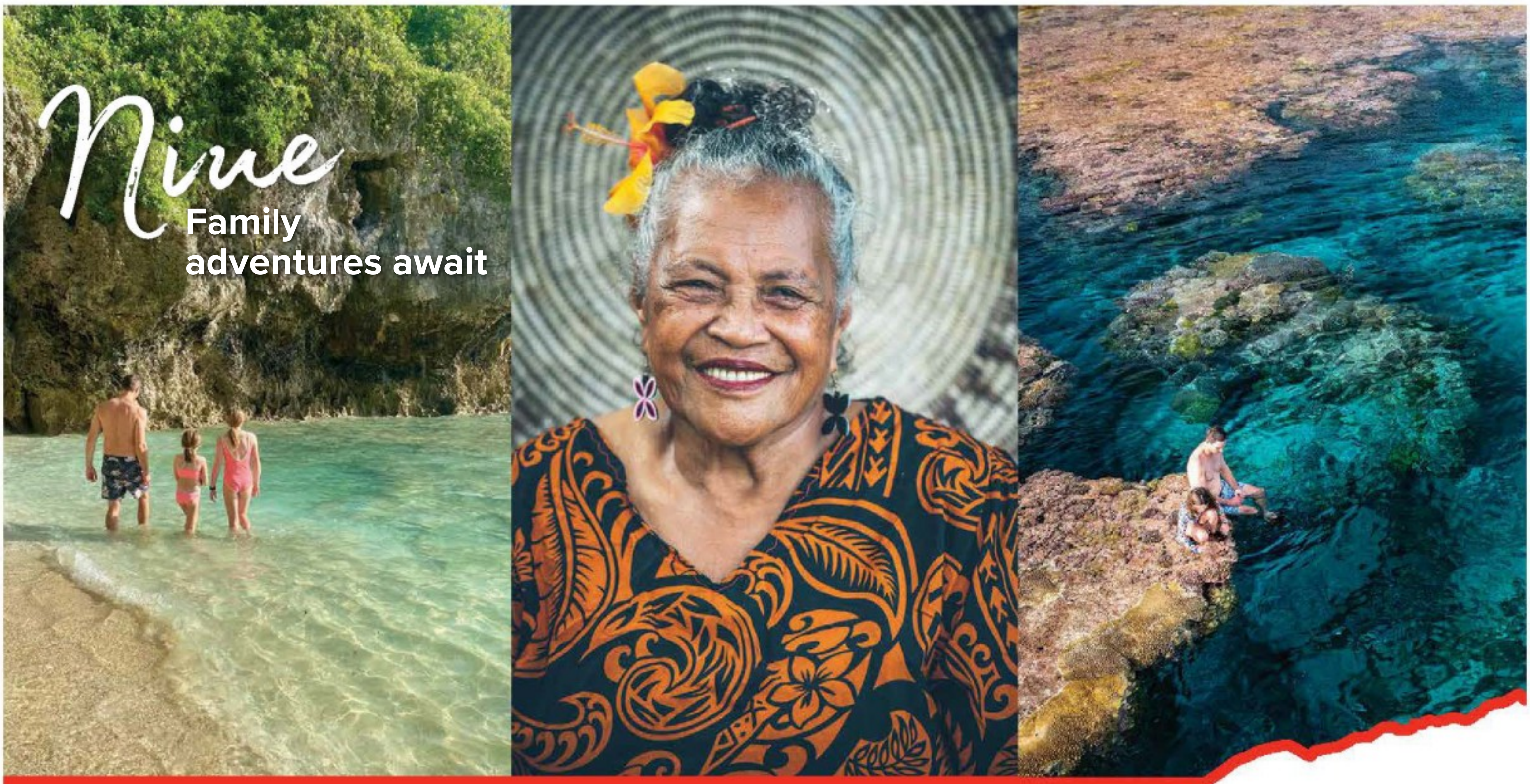
As one of the world's largest raised coral atolls, Niue is unlike other Pacific Islands with amazing giant rock pools within the reef to snorkel in, as well as caves and chasms to discover and explore. Operators can take you outside the reef to dive and snorkel, as well as swim with the resident spinner dolphins and seasonal humpback whales, and with visibility up to 80 metres it's well worth the trip. However, most days you'll find yourself packing your snorkelling gear in the car boot and setting off on your own adventure down the 30+ sea tracks Niue has to offer.

Families have a choice of different accommodation types, from a Resort to various family-friendly self-catering homes.

As your adventure comes to an end you will start planning your next trip to this diverse paradise, it is a destination you will be drawn back to… just like the migrating humpback whales.

www.niueisland.com

"As one of the world's largest raised coral atolls, Niue is unlike other Pacific Islands "



Create lifelong family memories with an authentic Pacific Island experience and head to Niue. You will arrive as a visitor and leave as a friend. It's safe, warm, no traffic and no queues. Relax, swim, fish or dive in the clearest waters in the Pacific.

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VANUATU
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VANUATU:
ERATAP RESORT'S COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND SOLUTIONS

By providing all guests with re-usable drinking bottles Eratap Resort has demonstrated their serious commitment in reducing single use plastics and waste to Vanuatu's landfill.

Globally, humans use one million plastic water bottles a minute, and tonnes of these end up washed into the sea or polluting the land. In Vanuatu there are bans on single use plastics, but these do not yet include water bottles. Conservative estimates of single use water bottles consumption estimate up to half a million plastic bottles or more going into Vanuatu's landfill every year – just from tourists use. When we add local consumption of water bottles to this number it becomes much more alarming.

"We care about our environment deeply and want to be part of positive solutions that help our island and protect its natural beauty" says Eratap resort owner Mr Tony Pittar. "It is complicated to successfully deal with waste especially on an island – by no longer using these plastic bottles and providing guests with viable alternatives, we are saving huge amounts of rubbish and keeping our environment clean. We feel this is important and worth the investment." he adds.

Local business Blue Pacific World started this initiative by funding this project aimed to reduce the use of plastic water bottles by visitors to Vanuatu. Blue Pacific World provides the re-usable bottles that tourism operators can purchase as alternatives to single use plastic drinking bottles. This project was launched earlier this year with the support of three pilot hotels Ramada by Wyndham, Eratap Beach Resort and Breakas on the Beach. Visitors staying in these hotels benefit by getting free drinking water refills and being part of this positive environmental solution.

"Our ultimate goal is ocean conservation, so we're not only focused on reduction of plastics" says owner of Blue Pacific World Ms Nicola Barnes, "there is a link to oceans and communities too. As our organisation is a social enterprise, part of the money from the purchase of the re-usable bottles provides important funding to our chosen partner Roawia Marine Coastal Rehabilitation. We chose this local rural tourism operator as our partner as they are actively involved in coral reef management and sustainable tourism practices – all causes we believe are very important and fit our ocean conservation goals and therefore are delighted to support." This unique approach encourages collaboration between orgnaisations and ensures that community and grass roots organizations are engaged and involved.

Max Zacharie, owner of Roawia Marine Coastal Rehabilitation Mangaliliu, operates his tourism business from his home village in North Efate and provides opportunities for visitors to swim with turtles in the wild as well as running educational days where guests can learn about coral and participate in active coral planting initiatives. His program also works with his local community on coastal clean ups, plastic recycling and will soon introduce a nursery and coastal planting program.

Together these private sector businesses are contributing to Vanuatu's sustainability goals.

"We look forward to expanding this project to many other hotels and to working with both private sector and non-profit organizations on a variety of ocean conservation projects. We also hope that the Government will one day provide support via things like waiver of vat on import of sustainable materials that contribute to positive environmental outcomes" adds Ms Barnes of Blue Pacific World. **www.bluepacific.world**

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There is plenty of beauty to be found away from the lagoon

HIKING IN RAROTONGA:
AN ADVENTURER'S GUIDE

Rarotonga isn't just for beach lovers; it's a rugged environment and sometimes challenging for those eager to lace up their boots and hit the trails. With volcanic peaks piercing the skyline and lush jungles with all the promise of adventure, the island's hiking opportunities vary; we strongly recommend you get a guide not just for safety and direction but to get the most out of your effort and that you are allowed to hike there. Pack your sturdy footwear, water, and insect repellent—this is no stroll on the sand. Here's a breakdown of some of the island's top trails. These summaries are a suggestion, not an accurate guideline, ask locally before heading out.

Cross Island Track and The Needle
This challenging 7.6-km trail slices through the heart of Rarotonga, leading adventurers into dense forest and up steep, root-strewn paths. The route passes Te Rua Manga (The Needle), a towering breccia pinnacle at 413m (1,355ft), one of the island's most iconic landmarks. The climb demands good grip and determination, especially after rain, but the views are worth every step.

The track continues southward to Papua Waterfall, showcasing Rarotonga's wild beauty. Start early, bring plenty of water, and prepare for a full-body workout as you tackle slippery terrain.
Location: Begin at Uruau Drive in Avarua, crossing Avatiu Stream to head south.

The Needle

Avana Walk
If you're looking for a gentler experience, the Avana Walk offers a serene 1.5-km path along a dirt road tracing the Avana Stream. It's an easy walk that includes refreshing stream crossings, perfect for a hot day. The trail's simplicity and relaxed vibe make it ideal for casual walkers.
Location: Access from Avana Drive, just south of the Avana Stream bridge in Muri.

Sunrise on the mountain top

Pro Tips

Footwear: Flip-flops are your enemy. Invest in sturdy hiking boots with solid grip for the often muddy and uneven terrain.

Preparation: Early starts beat the heat and avoid afternoon rains. Pack water, snacks, and a map or GPS.

Safety: Wet weather transforms trails into slippery gauntlets. If the forecast isn't favorable, consider postponing your hike.

Guides: For a deeper connection to the land, consider a guided tour. Operators like Adventure Cook Islands provide local expertise and storytelling.

From challenging ascents to tranquil streamside strolls, Rarotonga's trails offer something for every explorer. These hikes invite you to experience the island's untamed spirit—one step at a time.

Hiking, a great activity for the whole group

Unique guides

Raemaru Track Via Ferrata

This 2.7-km trail combines a steady mountain hike with a touch of adrenaline. Located on Rarotonga's west side, the route ascends through forested slopes before culminating in a thrilling 15m (50ft) rock climb aided by steel bars and ropes. At the summit, you'll find crisscrossing tracks and QR codes to uncover local legends and ecology. Guided tours are available for those who prefer local insight.

Location: From Arorangi, follow signs inland to Raemaru Heights Road.

Te Manga

For those craving solitude and a challenge, the Te Manga Track offers a demanding 6.4-km climb to Rarotonga's highest peak. The trail navigates ridge lines and steep terrain, with ropes in place at tricky sections. The summit rewards adventurers with sweeping views, but the path can be treacherous in wet weather. Download an offline map to stay on track.

Location: Begin at Tupapa Road, near Arai-Te-Tonga Road on the island's northeast side.

Pleasant Forest Walk and Hospital Track Loop

This short, 1.1-km loop is a great option for those seeking a quick yet rewarding escape into nature. With moderate terrain and light foot traffic, it's an ideal warm-up or cool-down hike that doesn't demand much time or effort.

Location: Near Avarua, specifics available locally.

Tereora Hill Rock

For an even shorter outing, this 0.8-km trail is a moderately challenging climb to a rocky outcrop with peaceful surroundings. It's a quiet retreat for those looking to immerse themselves in the island's natural beauty without the crowds.

Location: Accessible near Avarua; inquire locally for precise directions.

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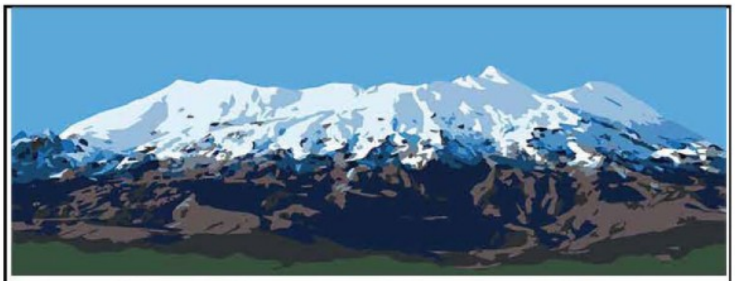

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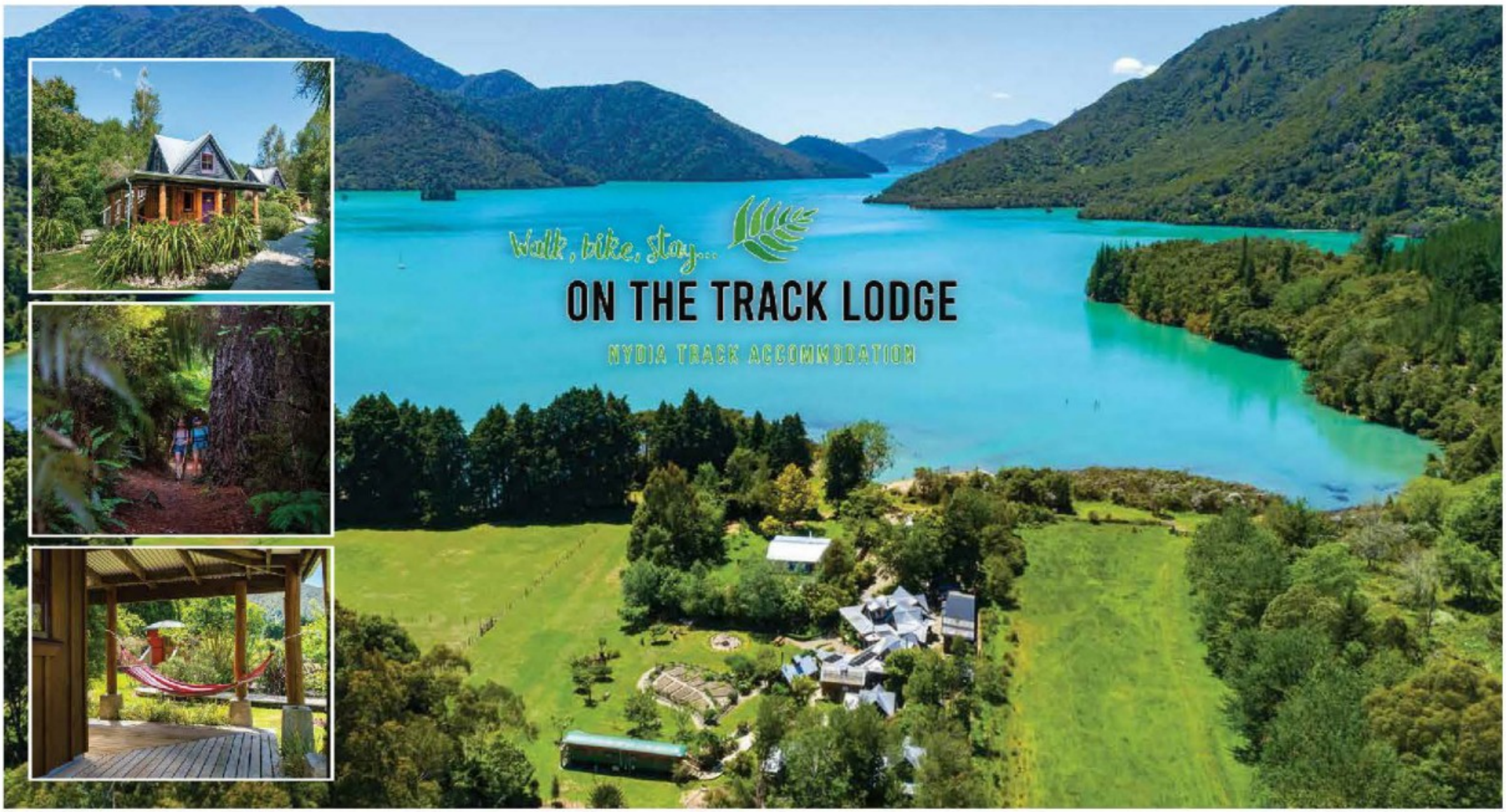

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